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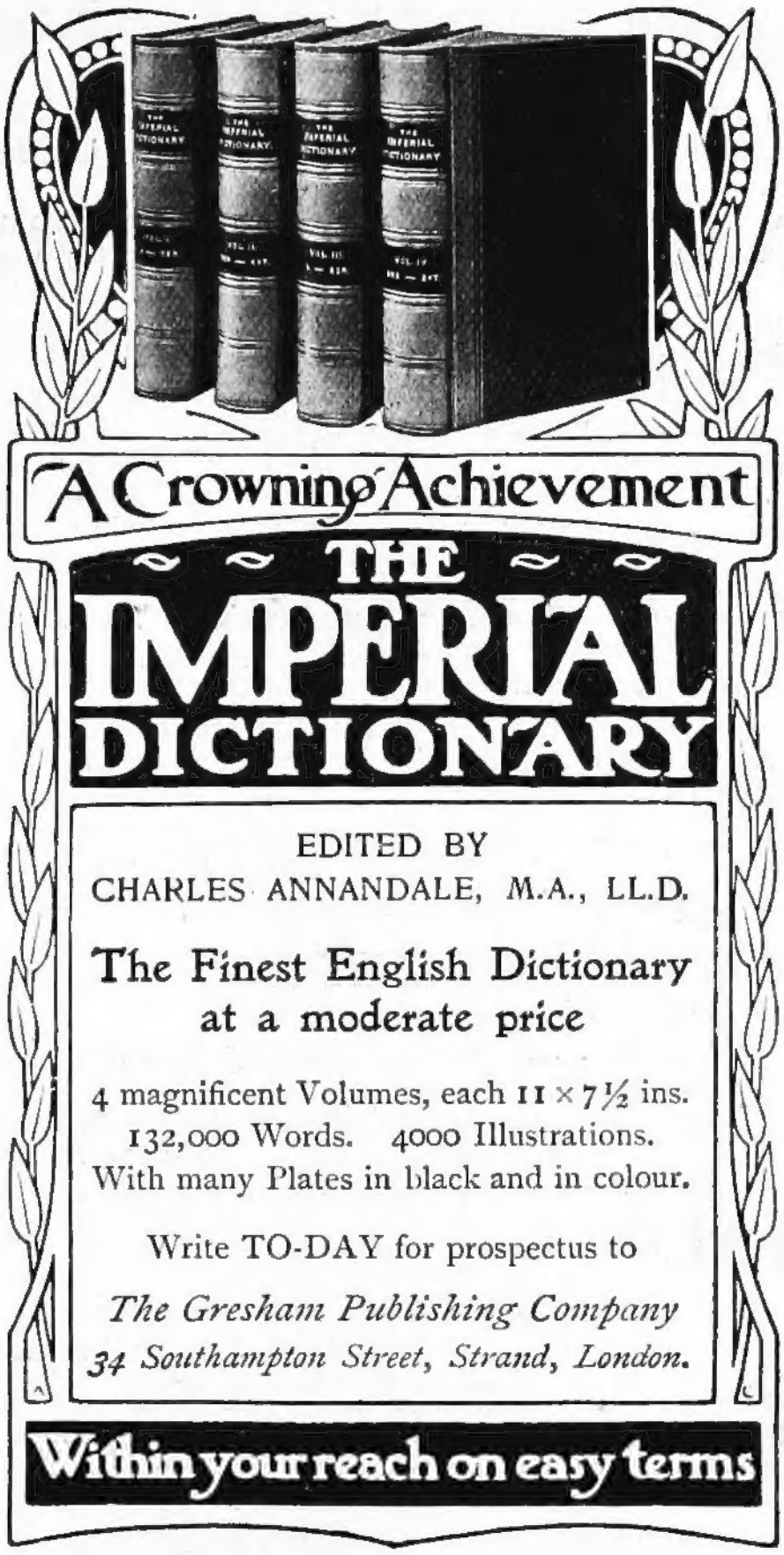
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JUNE 1909

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Fairy-spun of the thistle floss ;
And the beech-grove, and a wood-dove,
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Love flew by—the wedding day,
Peeping through her veil of dew,
Saw him, and her heart was fey—
His wings no shadows threw.

Love flew by—but day was gone,
Owls were hooting, whoo-to-whoo !
Happy-wedded lay alone
Who'd vowed that love was true.

Love flies by, and drops a rose,
Drops a rose, a sprig of yew ;
Happy these ; but, ah ! for those,
Whose love has cried : Adieu !

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  This green turf joins the sea
From dawn till even
  The sun, the grass, and we !

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And squanders, spendthrift,
  Her fragrance and her hum.

The sea birds hover,
  And Moon's pale scimitar
Is drawn to cover
  One little silver star.

The barques drift yonder
  Hull down, and melt away,
Where golden wonder
  Consoles the death of day.

And land is starkened
  By that far row of trees,
Like puff-balls darkened
  A-blowing down the breeze.

In self-elision
  We sleepy lovers nod;
Serene this vision—
  Serenity is God!

OLD YEAR

To-night Old Year must die
  And join the vagabonding shades of time,
And haunt, and sob, and sigh
  Around the tower where the New Year will chime

How fast the slim feet move!
  The fiddles whine, the reedy oboes flute;
Lips whisper, eyes look love—
  And Old Year's dying, dying underfoot!

So mute and spent, so wan—
  Poor corse!—beneath the laughter flying by;
The revel dances on
  And treads you to the dust—about to die!

Among the flowers that soon
  Will cling and breathe above a pallid death,
On with the rigadoon!
  Dance, dance! Be uttered never a mourning breath! . . .

The moonlight floods the grass,
  The music's hushed, and all the festal din;
The pale musicians pass,
  Each clasping close his green-cased violin.

Old Year! not breathing now,
  Along the polished floor you lie alone;
I bend and touch your brow—
The dead year, that has slipped away and gone!

Three Poems

By Gerald Gould

BRIDAL

Smooth the pillow out
Where I shall see your head
Lying with loose hair spread
When the dawn comes in to find
Two lovers close and kind.
—What should your hands be busy about
But making our bed ?

—And yet, I have loved so long
Those hands, and all they do
—Your hands, and all of you—
That now, when they caress
The couch of our happiness,
My heart cries out as at bitter wrong
To find this true.

I have hoped, with so much fear ;
I have laboured so to be
Of this pure precinct free,
I tremble, having won
—What is this you have done,
Giving a life so thrice too dear
To me, to me ?

O delicate and frail
And faint and fond and far !
Pale as a drowning star
In a moving sea of mist
—Too tender to be kissed,
Yet never so perilous, never so pale,
As now you are !—

Dear, give me strength to keep
Our strong and splendid vow !
From that bright burning brow
Put off the aureole
—Be body as well as soul !
You that have taught a dread so deep,
Teach courage now !

IN THE WOOD

When Launcelot and Guinevere
Walked from the Maying in the wood,
Surely they little understood
How much there was for hope and fear
To feed upon, and how the next
Short hour should leave them love-perplexed
And irremediably dear.

I think her hands were fine and fair
For capture of his heart—her eyes
More full of trouble than spring skies
When the late snow-clouds storm the air
—Her mouth too tender—and I guess
How close she caught his knightliness
In the bright bondage of her hair.

They must have walked a little way
Quietly, till the fear and hope
In silence gained too great a scope
And found them foolish things to say ;
And then the foolishness would strike
Like poison at both hearts alike,
And set their perilous looks astray.

The eyes and cheeks of her grew hot,
The hands and mouth of her grew dry ;
Her heart was clamorous for reply,
But asked not and was answered not,
Till in a sudden dreadful shout
His passionate "Guinevere," rang out
To meet her pitiful "Launcelot."

GARDEN AND FIRESIDE

HERE by the light of the piled-up embers,
  Flickering off and on into flame,
If out of its hopes the heart remembers
  What never was so, is the heart to blame?
If it frames her face in the shade of a garden
  Where all the hours were sweet and slow,
For sure, if she knew, she would smile and pardon
  The heart that remembers what never was so.

The flower-beds were seemly and serious ever,
  The walks quite quiet the whole year long,
Till what I remember, what happened never,
  Made of the silence a place of song!
Heart, wild heart, like fire are the roses,
  And all the tall white lilies like flame!
—If the heart suggests, if the heart supposes,
  If the heart desires, is the heart to blame?

Two Poems

By Eden Phillpotts

WELCOME

The hard azure on high
That bends over the Spring
Falls a tinkling, a thrill—
Sudden, silvery, shrill;
For the lark's in the sky
And his lyre-shapen wing
Lifts the song in a spiral at will.

In the East is the wind;
At the fringe of the wood
Shiver catkins of gold
O'er the fleece and the fold.
Sure the eaning ewes find
That the sunlight is good,
Though chill Eurus, his scythe's on the wold.

Dawns a sweet lemon light
Through the red-bosomed earth;
Leaps and sparkles a train
Along dingle and lane;
For the primrosen bright,
They are come to their birth
And the daffodil's dancing again.

HAMADRYAD

Hush! More than life unconscious harbours here.
A spirit haunts this solitary glen;
And first I saw her fitfully, as when
We miss a pleasant thought, yet know that it is near.

The spirit dwells in darkness and in light.
  Her mossy-scented breath most fragrant flies
  Misting in air; and once I saw her eyes
Gleaming, like purple flowers, upon the fringe of night.

And once the level beams of evening stole
  To search the twilight through and show me where,
  Wreathed with red leaves, the wonder of her hair
Diffused the gloaming like a radiant aureole.

A little river ran to kiss her feet
  And, finding them, did softly sing to see
  Them whiter than her own pure mystery,
Where moonlight and the foam-light amorously meet.

Wrought of the lunar rainbow, crowned with fire,
  Her faithful eyes are glimmering not for me.
  She turns from my too brief humanity
Where yon enormous shade heaves up his knotted spire.

Hail, little hamadryad, sweet and rare!
  Spirit, yet not immortal, since thy span
  Shall cease again, where surely it began,
With thine own oak, whose gold now shines upon the air.

Of this same autumn-flaming beacon part,
  As music sleeps within the silent bells,
  Soul of her tree, the dainty shadow dwells
In thrall of life and love unto that ancient heart.

Sestina : Altaforte

By Ezra Pound

Loquitur : *En* Bertrans de Born.

Dante Alighieri put this man in hell for that he was a stirrer-up of strife.
Eccovi !
Judge ye !
Have I dug him up again ?

The scene is at his castle, Altaforte. "Papiols" is his jongleur. "The Leopard," the *device* of Richard (Cœur de Lion).

I

Damn it all ! all this our South stinks peace.
You whoreson dog, Papiols, come ! Let's to music !
I have no life save when the swords clash.
But ah ! when I see the standards gold, vair, purple, opposing
And the broad fields beneath them turn crimson,
Then howl I my heart nigh mad with rejoicing.

II

In hot summer have I great rejoicing
When the tempests kill the earth's foul peace,
And the light'nings from black heav'n flash crimson,
And the fierce thunders roar me their music
And the winds shriek through the clouds mad, opposing,
And through all the riven skies God's swords clash.

III

Hell grant soon we hear again the swords clash !
And the shrill neighs of destriers in battle rejoicing,
Spiked breast to spiked breast opposing !
Better one hour's stour than a year's peace
With fat boards, bawds, wine and frail music !
Bah ! there's no wine like the blood's crimson !

IV

And I love to see the sun rise blood-crimson.
And I watch his spears through the dark clash
And it fills all my heart with rejoicing
And prys wide my mouth with fast music
When I see him so scorn and defy peace,
His lone might 'gainst all darkness opposing.

V

The man who fears war and squats opposing
My words for stour, hath no blood of crimson
But is fit only to rot in womanish peace
Far from where worth's won and the swords clash
For the death of such sluts I go rejoicing;
Yea, I fill all the air with my music.

VI

Papiols, Papiols, to the music!
There's no sound like to swords swords opposing,
No cry like the battle's rejoicing
When our elbows and swords drip the crimson
And our charges 'gainst "The Leopard's" rush clash.
May God damn for ever all who cry "Peace!"

VII

And let the music of the swords make them crimson
Hell grant soon we hear again the swords clash!
Hell blot black for alway the thought "Peace"!

La Paix et la Guerre en Europe

Par Camille Pelletan

Il n'est pas téméraire d'espérer que les temps présents préparent à l'humanité, pour une date plus ou moins prochaine, l'ouverture d'une ère de paix universelle. Mais quelle étrange physionomie ils auront devant l'histoire ! La paix dont le monde jouit, est armée jusqu'aux dents ; tous les ans elle dépense hâtivement des milliards à fondre des canons, à construire des cuirassés, à créer des engins de mort, à enseigner à des millions d'hommes tous les arts du massacre. Elle est secouée d'alarmes incessantes ; elle ne se repose que la main sur la détente du fusil. Et, bien que tous ceux qui pourraient tirer l'épée jurent avec la même énergie qu'ils ont horreur de toute pensée agressive, elle ressemble moins à la paix qu'à une interminable veillée d'armes, hantée de perpétuelles angoisses.

Voudra-t-on, et pourra-t-on jeter encore les nations civilisées dans ces conflits violents, pour lesquels on exprime partout une si profonde aversion et dont pourtant chaque incident politique ramène la menace, ou tout au moins la crainte ? C'est la question que tout le monde se pose et que je voudrais examiner.

I

Dans les grandes nations modernes, les éléments chez lesquels on peut encore trouver un état d'esprit belliqueux, se font de plus en plus rares. Bien entendu, je ne parle pas des militaires de profession, pour lesquels la guerre est la raison d'être de l'existence. Un officier, en temps de paix, est un peu comme un acteur qui répéterait toute sa vie une pièce qu'il n'arriverait jamais à jouer devant le public. Quelle carrière que celle d'un de Moltke, sentant en lui le génie des grandes opérations, concentrant, avec le fanatisme d'une passion exclusive, toutes ses forces de travail, toutes ses espérances de gloire, sur l'étude minutieuse des campagnes futures, ne vivant que pour cette étude, et usant près d'un demi siècle dans l'ombre de son bureau, à préparer des guerres qui n'éclataient jamais. On comprend, en

lisant sa vie, ce que Bismarck en raconte, qu'à la veille de la guerre de 1870, septuagénaire, frêle et ridé, quand les nouvelles du jour sentaient la poudre, il avait de subits retours de jeunesse, sa taille se redressait, il se retrouvait leste, joyeux et fringant. Mais pour peu que le vent tournât à la paix, il tombait soudain de vieillesse : on lui aurait donné cent ans. Qu'un officier ait, pour la guerre, plus de passion qu'elle en mérite, nul ne peut le trouver mauvais. Nous avons tous besoin qu'il aime sa fonction et son art.

Mais, en dehors des spécialistes, ceux qui rêvent encore pour leur pays les lauriers sanglants des combats, sont aujourd'hui bien peu nombreux. Les choses ont singulièrement changé chez nous à cet égard. Il y a soixante ou soixante-dix ans, la France était " chauvine," comme on dit. Les grands souvenirs du premier Empire, l'esprit étroit et pusillanime de la monarchie de Juillet, avaient créé une contagion d'humeur belliqueuse. Il y eut, pour des motifs plus graves, un mouvement analogue dans les années qui suivirent nos désastres. Il a disparu avec les générations qui avaient connu les colères de la défaite. Il a disparu aussi, parce qu'on l'a détourné, en l'abaissant, sur des expéditions et des conquêtes lointaines, justement impopulaires. Aujourd'hui, les tempéraments sujets aux anciennes surexcitations chauvines sont extrêmement clairsemés. On connait, je crois, dans tous les pays, le type des hommes personnellement tranquilles et amis de leurs aises, mais ayant la manie de rêver, les pieds sur leurs chenets, de batailles et de victoires ; conservant, vis-à-vis des peuples étrangers, la vieille haine atavique des tribus barbares contre la tribu voisine ; vibrant avec une émotion particulière, entre deux romances plus que décolletées, aux chansons belliqueuses de café concert ; insatiables en politique d'armements, s'ils ne leur coûte rien, et de conquêtes nouvelles, si elles ne compromettent pas leur repos. Ce genre d'hommes abonde sur les boulevards parisiens, et même dans le monde des petits commerçants. Il a formé la clientèle du parti Nationaliste, et croit avoir le monopole du patriotisme. Mais il ne serait pas prudent de mettre son patriotisme à l'épreuve. Il s'enivre du bruit des clairons et des tambours quand un bataillon passe dans la rue, et salue le drapeau tricolore comme un Saint-Sacrement laïque. Mais il n'aime aucune sorte de désagrément. C'est parmi les gens de cette sorte que se recrutaient, en 1870, dans les jours qui précédèrent la déclaration de guerre, les braillards qui parcouraient les boulevards en criant : " À Berlin ! " ; et qui traitaient de sans-Patrie quiconque avait horreur de le guerre. Mais, après nos premières défaites, et

quand Gambetta accomplit son œuvre magnifique de défense désespérée du territoire, ces grands patriotes étaient tous passionnés pour la conclusion immédiate de la paix, et tiraient dans le dos du puissant tribun pendant qu'il faisait face à l'ennemi.

Un autre élément de la population affecte aussi des allures militaristes et des dehors belliqueux. Ce sont les partis de réaction cléricale, qui de plus en plus battus à toutes les élections, n'attendent plus leur salut que d'un grand sabre de coup d'État. Il faut des victoires au dehors, pour couronner un soldat du prestige qui lui donnerait quelques chances d'étouffer les libertés intérieures. C'est ainsi que Louis-Bonaparte, préparant le 2 Décembre, eut soin d'envoyer préalablement le général qu'il comptait charger de l'exécution, St.-Arnaud, remporter de faciles victoires en Kabylie. L'Église catholique a toujours rêvé une sainte-alliance du soldat et du moine, le premier servant d'instrument au second. Cette idée fixe a été maintes fois avouée ou plutôt proclamée par d'illustres orateurs Dominicains à une époque récente. Et c'est, vous le savez, après une tentative avortée de coup de force, que nous avons fait le Ministère de Défense Républicaine, juste à temps : le chef d'État-Major général de l'armée allait toutes les semaines prendre le mot d'ordre dans la cellule d'un père Jesuite. Mais les partis qui font un tel calcul se garderaient d'affronter les périls d'une guerre européenne. Leur humeur batailleuse ne dépasse pas les expéditions exotiques contre des sauvages, expéditions où, quelles que soient les fautes commises, on est toujours certain de la victoire finale, et où l'on peut fabriquer un grand homme de guerre à coup sûr. D'ailleurs, ces partis sont aujourd'hui réduits à une telle impuissance, surtout depuis la rupture du Concordat, qu'ils semblent avoir abandonné toute leurs anciennes illusions.

J'en viens enfin à un autre élément, plus puissant et plus dangereux. Je parle des intérêts financiers qui exploitent la préparation à la guerre. Ceux-là ont une influence redoutable, soit à cause de leurs énormes capitaux, soit en raison de leurs relations quotidiennes avec tous les services publics, soit surtout parce qu'ils exercent, chez nous, une influence sans égale sur la presse. Chose singulière ! Sans doute à cause de leur zèle très désintéressé pour la prospérité de nos grandes industries, les journaux des partis les plus divers se rencontrent dans une ardeur commune pour les intérêts de nos puissants fournisseurs de guerre. Il n'y a guère que nos grandes compagnies de chemins de fer qui aient su inspirer àl a presse une si brûlante sollicitude. L'action, cachée, mais très remuante, de ces gros intérêts

financiers, n'est pas pour rien dans le tableau lamentable, qu'on trace obstinément, même en France, de nos armées de terre et de mer. Cette action trouve un concours naturel dans les accusations que font entendre toutes les oppositions ; et elle n'est point contre-carrée par les services compétents du gouvernement, qui comptent ainsi arracher au Parlement d'énormes crédits, comme les fournisseurs comptent obtenir d'énormes commandes, et qui aiment mieux grossir leurs budgets que de défendre leur œuvre.

Mais cet élément financier a plus d'intérêt à la perpétuelle préparation de la guerre qu'à la guerre elle-même ; elle épuiserait les ressources sur lesquelles il vit. Il sème l'alarme : il ne poussera pas aux combats. J'entends les combats dangereux des grandes guerres. Il n'en est pas tout à fait de même des expéditions plus ou moins coloniales ou exotiques, qui ont leur clientèle de brasseurs d'affaires, toujours impatients de mettre leurs griffes rapaces sur les bénéfices exorbitants qu'on ramasse aisément dans le monde fantastique des régions lointaines. C'est dans le pays des Mille et une Nuits qu'il faut aller chercher la caverne d'Ali Baba.

En dehors de ces éléments particuliers, tout le monde a la plus profonde aversion pour la guerre et pour les dépenses ruineuses qu'elle impose, même en pleine paix. C'est dire le sentiment des neuf cent quatre-vingt-dix-neuf millièmes de la nation. Au temps des armées de métier, les grands conflits armés ne dérangeaient que les pays qui étaient le théâtre des opérations. Pour ceux qui envoyaient leurs armées se battre au dehors, les batailles n'étaient qu'un spectacle lointain, dont ils pouvaient, à leur aise, apprécier les glorieuses beautés. Aujourd'hui, où tous marcheraient, sauf les enfants, les vieillards et les malades, c'est autre chose. On sait assez que les masses ouvrières, en majeure partie Socialistes, ont horreur de la guerre : les masses paysannes ne l'aiment pas plus. La bourgeoisie a les mêmes répugnances depuis qu'elle ne peut plus s'acheter de remplaçants et que ses enfants vont à la caserne avec les enfants du peuple.

Cette aversion pour les sinistres aventures du champ de bataille ne pourrait être surmontée que par le besoin de se défendre contre une attaque : elle se tournerait alors en colère contre l'agresseur et pourrait lui coûter cher. Mais un gouvernement qui voudrait sans nécessité absolue et certaine jeter la nation dans un conflit armé, la soulèverait presque tout entière contre lui.

Il n'aurait pas seulement affaire aux populations qu'il

enverrait au feu : il aurait encore à compter avec l'irritation de tous les intérêts commerciaux, industriels et financier. Le prodigieux ensemble de mécanismes producteurs qui crée incessament, avec une si colossale puissance, les richesses dont vit le monde moderne, ne peut pas être impunément arrêté un seul jour. Nous ne sommes plus au temps où le fonctionnement des organismes encore primitifs de la vie économique pouvait être suspendu sans désastre. La partie civilisée du globe est devenue une immense usine, dont toutes les parties concourent à une œuvre commune, et ont besoin les unes des autres ; où chaque heure doit accomplir sa tâche, sous peine d'amener une souffrance générale ; et où, au milieu de l'enchevêtrement des intérêts, le moindre arrêt est une cause de ruine. Ce ne sont pas seulement les pays engagés dans un conflit armé qui en pâtissent : ce sont tous ceux qui ont avec eux d'importantes relations commerciales. Le monde des affaires, si puissant aujourd'hui sur tous les gouvernements, ne pourrait, sans folie, désirer ou accepter une guerre.

Il serait donc à peu près impossible, dans tous les pays libres, de jeter à la légère le sort de la nation dans les hasards de la force brutale. L'opinion de toutes les nations, à cet égard, se manifeste avec une puissance extrême. On pouvait encore redouter récemment qu'en Allemagne, la confiance et les ambitions nourries par d'éclatantes victoires, le prestige d'un brillant souverain et de vieille traditions de pouvoir personnel renforcées par le souvenir des services réels rendus par la dynastie, n'aient établi un état de choses exceptionnel, et désarmé l'opinion devant les volontés d'un seul. Le spectacle si saisissant que nous venons d'avoir détruit ces appréhensions. Ce n'est pas un parti, ni un groupe de partis, c'est l'ensemble de la nation qui ne veut pas qu'il soit permis à une pensée individuelle, si haut placée qu'elle soit, d'exposer l'Empire aux aventures.

II

Si l'on cherche quelles pourraient être, en Europe, les causes d'un conflit, ce n'est pas chez nous qu'on les trouvera. Nul, assurément, ne peut demander à la France de considérer comme légitime et définitive l'œuvre accomplie du droit du plus fort en 1871, tant que les populations séparées de leur patrie à ce moment n'auront pas dit elles-mêmes qu'elles entendaient rester ce qu'elles sont aujourd'hui, et sanctionné la conquête par un acte de leur libre volonté. Mais l'idée de faire appel à la force des armes pour détruire ce que la force des armes

a fait il y a trente-huit ans, ne se manifeste plus nulle part, depuis de longues années. On n'oserait plus proposer d'infliger à l'Europe les désastres et les destructions d'une guerre, même pour une si noble cause. Gambetta a donné à la pensée nationale une formule très exacte, quand il a parlé à ce sujet, de la "justice immanente" des événements, dans laquelle les peuples, confiants dans leur droit, et résolus à la paix, placent toutes leurs espérances. Aucune autre question n'aurait pu motiver, de notre part, des arrière-pensées d'agression ; et tous ceux qui connaissent un peu notre pays, savent combien la France presque entière répudie de pareilles pensées.

Notre stupéfaction n'a pas été médiocre, quand quelques uns ont paru croire qu'une rupture pouvait sortir de la question du Maroc. La presse d'information n'a pas été étrangère aux alarmes répandues à ce moment : c'est son intérêt et son métier de grossir et de dramatiser tous les incidents, pour tenir son public en haleine. Le gouvernement allemand a semblé plutôt chercher à exagérer les inquiétudes, parce qu'il avait besoin d'une diversion qui détournât l'attention publique d'une question qui le gênait ; et je dois ajouter que notre gouvernement n'a peut-être pas fait tout ce qu'il pouvait pour rassurer le public. En réalité, si nous tenons tout naturellement à ce que l'état des choses dans l'Empire Chérifien ne devienne pas menaçant pour notre Algérie, tout projet de conquête plus ou moins directe, plus ou moins avouée du côté du Maroc, ne soulèverait plus que de la méfiance dans l'immense majorité du pays. On est las de ces aventures d'outre-mer, qui coûtent très cher, et font verser le sang français. Celle du Tonkin, bien qu'elle ne nous eût exposés à aucune complication diplomatique, puisqu'elle avait été préparée d'accord avec l'Allemagne, avait déjà fait condamner par le suffrage universel, il y a vingt-quatre ans, les partis qui s'etaient associés dans cette affaire à Jules Ferry. Le sentiment public serait plus véhément aujourd'hui. Et si, à l'insu de tous, un homme politique a pu essayer de nous acheminer vers une telle entreprise, on peut dire qu'aussitôt que la nature de l'opération a été bien connue, il a été sacrifié à l'opinion publique de la France, autant et plus qu'aux appréhensions de l'étranger.

Si l'on regarde la plupart des autres puissances Européennes, on y cherche vainement des raisons qui motivent des pensées de guerre. Ni l'Angleterre, ni l'Italie, ni l'Espagne ne songent notoirement à rien de semblable. Quant à la Russie, ses malheurs récents et sa crise intérieure l'attachent évidemment à la paix. De deux côtés seulement viennent les inquiétudes qui pesent sur l'opinion du monde : de l'Allemagne et de l'Autriche-Hongrie.

LA PAIX ET LA GUERRE EN EUROPE

Bismarck a raconté qu'un jour au Conseil des Ministres Prussiens, au moment où l'affaire de Schleswig-Holstein était engagée, comme sa politique de rupture se heurtait à des objections, il se mit à dire avec une grande véhémence à son souverain, que tous les rois de Prusse, ses prédécesseurs, avaient laissé leurs états plus grands qu'ils ne les avaient trouvés ; et qu'il était inadmissible que le présent règne constituât, à ce point de vue, une exception unique. Un tel langage était si extraordinaire à ce moment, où la Prusse sortait d'une longue période de paix parfois humiliante, et où elle était restée dans un effacement systématique durant les deux guerres de Crimée et d'Italie, qu'on crut que le grand homme d'état avait parlé sous l'influence d'un trop bon déjeuner, et qu'on fit supprimer l'incident au procès-verbal du Conseil. Bismarck savait ce qu'il disait ; c'était l'amorce de toute sa politique ultérieure ; et il fit rétablir le discours supprimé.

Ce fut, en effet, une tradition constante des Hohenzollern, de travailler à coudre quelques lambeaux de territoire à leur domaine héréditaire. Cette tradition était une question de vie et de mort pour la vieille Prusse, faites de pièces séparées les unes des autres ; c'était aussi une condition d'existence normale pour l'ancienne Allemagne, paralysée par l'absurde morcellement que lui avait légué le moyen âge. Cette tradition n'a plus, aujourd'hui, les mêmes raisons d'être : mais le souverain actuel de l'Allemagne est-il de cet avis ? C'est possible ; mais nul n'ignore que par sa première éducation politique il a été surtout l'élève de Bismarck : on le voit très brillant, très actif, et brulant du désir légitime d'occuper le monde de sa renommée ; il a paru longtemps encourager l'agitation pangermaniste ; il a mis une passion et une énergie singulières à donner à l'Allemagne une des premières flottes du globe, non assurément dans le but unique de garder les rivages de l'Empire, déjà si bien gardis par la nature. C'est plus qu'il n'en faut pour qu'on se demande s'il résignera aisément à avoir passé sur cette terre sans avoir repris la tradition maîtresse de sa dynastie, et pour attacher une importance particulière aux paroles retentissantes par lesquelles il semble se plaire à réveiller souvent l'attention de l'Europe.

Il faut que ce sentiment soit bien répandu, pour que l'Allemagne, malgré l'admiration sympathique qu'elle professait en grande majorité pour son souverain, ait fini par s'en émouvoir. On se plaint de l'autre côté du Rhin de la formation des alliances ou des amitiés, au milieu desquelles l'Empire Germanique trouve qu'il est un peu isolé. Peut-on y voir une marque d'hostilité ou une menace contre l'Allemagne ? Et n'est-ce pas

un mouvement tout naturel dans une Europe qui veut vivre en paix ? Il est fort possible qu'il n'y ait là que des apparences qui ne correspondent pas aux réalités ; mais les apparences expliquent les inquiétudes qui se sont produites.

Les principales difficultés viennent évidemment de la situation de l'Autriche-Hongrie et des Balkans. Là se trouvent, en effet, tantôt juxtaposées, tantôt mêlées, soit dans les mêmes provinces, soit dans les mêmes villes ou les mêmes villages, des races rivales ou plutôt ennemies, dans une sorte de chaos qu'il faudra bien que l'avenir débrouille. Je ne veux pas dire que le mélange de races très différentes dans le même état y fasse naître forcément de dangereuses divisions. L'exemple de la petite Suisse est singulièrement précieux à cet égard. Là des populations Allemandes, Françaises, Italiennes, Latines diverses de sang, de langue et de religion, mais réunies par leur histoire, par leur admirable liberté, par les mœurs que l'une et l'autre leur ont faites, n'y sont séparées par aucune hostilité et portent une même affection à la patrie commune. Même l'ambition envahissante de l'Église romaine, quel que puissance qu'elle exerce sur certains cantons, n'est arrivée à y créer que des scissions passagères. Ce n'est donc point un problème insoluble, de soustraire à tout péril de convulsions intérieures, dans le même état, l'assemblage des races les plus bigarrées, et de leur faire aimer la vie commune. Il y a des irrédentistes à Trieste, à Trente, en Dalmatie ; il n'y en a pas dans le Tessin.

Mais ni l'ancienne monarchie viennoise, ni la vieille Turquie n'étaient capables de réunir en un même corps les populations disparates confondues sous leur autorité. Jusqu'aux cruelles leçons de Solférino et de Sadowa, la première n'a été qu'un despotisme bigot, sans pensée, sans organisation, sans souci ni des intérêts, ni de l'esprit des peuples, détestant le progrès, détestant jusqu'aux moindres réformes, et ne travaillant guerre qu'à maintenir par la force ses sujets dans la stupide et paisible passivité des troupeaux de moutons. Un Empire où, lors de la lutte finale contre Napoléon, le souverain trouvant le mot de " Patrie " dans un brouillon de proclamation de Metternich, le rayait de sa main comme révolutionnaire et écrivait à la place " mes sujets," n'était guère propre à créer un lieu moral entre les populations sur lesquelles il pesait. L'Autriche-Hongrie, depuis qu'elle s'est réveillée et qu'elle est entrée dans la vie moderne, a trouvé en face d'elle tous les problèmes ajournés et aggravés par des siècles d'étouffement et d'immobilité. Nul ne peut croire qu'elle les ait résolus : un état de choses qui prétend supprimer, dans la vie de la nation, la plus nombreuse des trois

races principales, n'est forcément qu'une transition, qu'un ajournement nouveau du problème. Ce qui est singulièrement inquiétant pour l'avenir, c'est que le génie insatiable du Gésû, toujours puissant à la Cour de Vienne, semble jeter au travers de problèmes déjà si difficiles des rêves éternels de domination, qui ont déjà tant de fois bouleversé les états. On commence à voir clairement que ce qu'il y au fond des deux annexions qui ont troublé le repos de l'Europe, c'est le projet d'un vaste groupement des populations Slaves, sous l'autorité de l'Église romaine. Un grand État Slave, mis par le Gésû sous le pouvoir moral du Vatican ! Cela n'est pas nouveau : le monde l'a déjà vu. Cela s'est appelé le royaume de Pologne ; et l'on sait de quoi il est mort.

Puissons-nous échapper aux dangers où nous précipiterait un retour officiel de la vieille politique dévote du Saint-Empire jetant dans des questions, déjà si difficiles, un si funeste élément de déchirement et de bouleversement ! Il y a pour l'Europe un intérêt vital à ce que l'organisation définitive de l'Autriche s'opère sans bouleversement, sans déchirement, et même sans secousses trop violentes. La politique austro-hongroise serait bien aveugle si elle oubliait les causes de division et d'instabilité qui la menacent et qui lui interdisent toute tentative d'empiètement. Une liquidation tumultueuse de la question des races en Autriche ne risquerait pas seulement de devenir mortelle pour l'Autriche elle-même ; elle serait pour l'Europe le malheur le plus redoutable. Toutes les puissances veulent, ne serait-ce que dans leur intérêt le plus pressant, que la monarchie austro-hongroise reste intacte ; qu'elle ne compromettre pas elle-même l'accomplissement d'un vœu si unanime !

Une situation analogue avait été créée en Turquie par l'ancien régime ottoman ; elle n'avait pas été résolue par les démembrements partiels, qui, en accordant l'indépendance à une partie des anciennes provinces de la Porte, avaient laissé sous la domination du Sultan des frères de race et de cœur, des populations constituées en états distincts. La pacifique révolution qui vient de transformer la Turquie permet d'espérer qu'on pourra résoudre bien des difficultés et écarter bien des périls. J'ai vu à Constantinople des races qui semblaient séparées à jamais, par leur origine, par leur caractère, par leurs croyances, par des haines traditionnelles, par le souvenir des plus cruelles persécutions, par de larges et ineffaçables taches de sang—je les ai vu confondues dans un enthousiasme commun pour les libertés nouvelles. J'ai vu fraterniser les prêtres de religions qui se condamnent. Le fanatisme musulman avait semblé longtemps un obstacle in-

vincible. Nous avons eu la surprise d'apprendre par une expérience décisive que le Mahometanisme, sans rien perdre de sa foi ardente et exclusive, était capable de se concilier, beaucoup mieux que certaines Églises de notre connaissance, avec la tolérance, le progrès et les libertés modernes. Ce fut là un des plus beaux spectacles de l'histoire : puisse-t-il durer ! Puisse l'Europe comprendre (un peu mieux qu'elle ne la fait jusqu'ici) que c'est un de ses premiers devoirs, et un de ses plus grands intérêts, d'encourager un si magnifique mouvement ; de ne point le compromettre et le diminuer devant l'opposition de la vieille Turquie, par des exigences et des prétentions qu'on n'avait point devant le despotisme de la veille ; et de lui donner des forces au contraire pour qu'il puisse accomplir son œuvre, dans l'intérêt de la paix du monde !

Telle est, à mon sens, la situation dans les quelques parties de l'Europe ou l'on pourrait le plus redouter des causes de conflit. Il me semble que les forces sur lesquelles ou est en droit de compter pour le maintien de la paix, sont assez puissantes pour éviter des guerres nouvelles. La volonté à peu près unanime de toutes les grandes nations ; les besoins impérieux de tous les grands intérêts financiers, industriels ou commerciaux ; l'intervention certaine de presque toutes les grandes puissances pour écarter les appels à la force brutale, ne sont point des éléments qu'une politique d'agression, et quelque côté qu'elle se produise puisse braver sans la plus folle témérité. On s'est un peu moqué de l'institution internationale établie à La Haye pour le maintien de la paix. Il est très vrai que les attributions positives qu'on lui a reconnues sont bien faibles, et presque platoniques ; mais ce fait nouveau que toutes les grandes puissances du monde proclament officiellement par leur adhésion que la guerre est pour elle un mal affreux, dont elles cherchent à libérer l'humanité, a une énorme portée à la fois morale et pratique. Les puissances qui se sont ainsi engagées ont heureusement, pour réaliser un si beau programme, d'autres moyens que ceux que la diplomatie leur a accordés à La Haye. Si ces gouvernements restent fidèles à la fois, à la pensée qu'ils ont officiellement adoptée, et aux nations qu'ils représentent, comment douter qu'en s'unissant, ils ne soient assez forts pour imposer des délibérations et des solutions pacifiques aux plus récalcitrants, s'il s'en trouve ?

III

Il ne serait pas inutile, pour savoir à quel point nous courons le danger d'une guerre, de rechercher de quel côté, en pareil cas,

seraient les chances de victoire ; c'est-à-dire de comparer les forces d'attaque et de défense des diverses puissances. Ces sortes d'études sont fort à la mode : j'en lis souvent ; mais je me garderai bien d'en ajouter une à celles que j'ai lues, tant il me semble qu'il y a d'incertitude dans les appréciations de cette nature.

Le public est d'abord assez mal renseigné sur les forces de chaque armée. En effet, la plupart des gouvernements, les hommes de métier les plus considérables, et, chez nous au moins, à peu près toute la presse, travaillent, je dirai presque de parti pris, à représenter les forces de leur pays comme tout à fait insuffisantes ; les uns pour obtenir de très gros crédits du parlement ; les autres par un zèle professionnel inévitable ; la dernière pour les motifs que j'ai indiqués au début de cet article. Dans les états ou les groupes d'état qu'un conflit mettrait vraisemblablement aux prises, chacun proclame qu'il est dans une situation d'infériorité à laquelle il importe de remédier, coûte que coûte ; ce qui implique quelque contradiction : on ne peut pas être le plus faible des deux côtés à la fois.

Qui croire ? Et comment choisir ? À l'exception de la Russie, à qui cela n'a guère profité, aucune des grandes puissances militaires n'a fait l'expérience d'une vrai guerre depuis nos malheurs de 1871 ; aucune n'a fait l'expérience d'un véritable combat naval depuis 1866. En dehors des états du Czar, les officiers qui ont reçu les leçons du feu, les seuls sérieuses, disparaissent chaque jour dans les armées de terre ; et sauf en Autriche et en Italie, il n'y en a dans aucune Marine. Nous avons, il est vrai, les enseignements de la récente guerre russo-japonaise. Mais il est à remarquer que les partisans des systèmes opposés sur toutes les questions militaires, les interprètent en leur sens, et en triomphent également. Chez nous, depuis que les Japonais ont détruit la Marine russe, avec une flotte plus faible en cuirassés, plus forte en croiseurs, pourvue d'une artillerie moyenne considérable, et secondée par de très belles flottilles de torpilleurs, ou en a déduit la condamnation des croiseurs, de l'artillerie moyenne et des petits navires porte-torpilles. La nature est une bonne mère ; elle a épargné à l'homme l'humiliation de se croire condamné par l'expérience en donnant à chacun de nous la précieuse faculté de lire dans les faits, quels qu'ils soient, la confirmation de ses idées préconçues.

Ajoutez que le sort des guerres prochaines sera en grande partie décidé par d'immenses outillages scientifiques, qui ont été à peine mis à l'épreuve, et qui, d'ailleurs, se compliquent, s'améliorent, se transforment tous les jours. Rien ne permet de prévoir

avec précision ce qui arrivera dans des guerres où des batteries tireront sans se voir, avec de la poudre sans fumée ; où l'artillerie crachant, avec une rapidité vertigineuse, des poids énormes de projectiles, sera à la merci, sur terre, de ses moyens de ravitaillement ; sur mer de l'approvisionnement de ses soutes, d'autant plus faible que les calibres sont plus gros, et risquera de racheter, par un épuisement rapide, les tirs foudroyants du début. Ou ne sait point encore ce que donneront les sous-marins, mal vus de toutes les amirautés. Leur puissance dépend en grand partie de la création d'une force motrice adapée a leurs besoins, et qui serait trouvée depuis longtemps si l'on avait comme stimulant, pour arriver à sa découverte, l'intérêt commercial qui a fait réaliser le moteur de l'auto, ou le libre esprit de recherche auquel on doit les aéroplanes, au lieu des recherches peu pressées d'aboutir, de corps attachés par les triples liens de l'habitude, des vielles affections et des intérêts de carrière, aux grands navires menacés par cet engin de l'avenir. Les batailles navales de la Russie et du Japon ont été livrées dans des conditions si inégales que même si on consentait à les étudier sans esprit préconçu, on aurait peine à en tirer des renseignements décisif. Le découragement et les fautes du commandement, le mauvais vouloir des équipages, l'étrange aberration qui a fait marcher au combat avec des navires surchargés et des cuirassés noyées, ont amené des destructions si rapides de la flotte russe qu'il serait difficile d'en tirer des conclusions applicables à une lutte plus normale. Il y aurait du fait des outillages nouveaux une énorme part d'inconnue dans la prochaine guerre, si elle devait éclater. Je ne veux pas dire par là que d'ici longtemps on risque de voir envahir l'Angleterre en aéroplanes ; mais même en dehors de cette fantaisie la part d'imprévu à laquelle il faut s'attendre est énorme. Nous ne manquons pas, il est vrai, de gens qui calculent, à une décimale près, les coefficients de forces respectives des marines : les mathématiciens aiment ce genre de jeu. Plus habitué aux abstractions qu'aux réalités, ils bâtissent leurs calculs sur une hypothèse arbitraire, quelquefois tout à fait bizarre, et vous disent, à un millième près, ce que chaque puissance pèsera dans la balance. Nous avons lu ces jours-ci des extraits d'une Revue anglaise qui se livre à des calculs de ce genre, dont, chez nous, de gros intérêts financiers se sont hâtés de s'emparer. Je voudrais, pour me former une opinion, avoir quelque chose de plus probant.

On ne peut même pas s'appuyer, pour formuler des prévisions sérieuses, sur les sommes dépensées par les divers états pour leurs organisations de guerre. La puissance militaire d'un pays n'est

nullement proportionnelle au chiffre de milliards qu'il lui a sacrifiés. Tout d'abord, il est manifeste qu'au point de vue du personnel, un même chiffre de dépenses représente des résultats infiniment plus considérables chez un peuple qui possède le service obligatoire, et n'a plus qu'à entretenir les hommes de ses deux armées, que chez un peuple qui n'a sous les drapeaux que ceux qui voulent bien y venir, et qu'il est obligé d'attirer par de fortes payes. Mais même en dehors de cette considération, toute l'histoire montre combien ou risquerait de se tromper, en escomptant la victoire à cause des énormes sacrifices d'argent qu'on a consentis pour la préparer. Le hasard a voulu que dans toutes les grandes guerres de ces quarante dernières années, le vainqueur ait été celui qui avait fait le moins de frais. Quand j'ai été chargé de rapporter le budget de la guerre, j'ai pu établir que dans les années qui ont précédé 1870, l'Empire français avait dépensé notablement plus que tous les États de l'Allemagne réunis, non seulement pour sa flotte (la flotte allemande à ce moment existait à peine), mais encore pour son armée de terre. La Russie consacrait des sommes infiniment plus considérables à ses troupes que la Turquie ; pourtant celle-ci l'a arrêtée à Plevna ; et peut-être l'immense Empire moscovite ne serait-il pas venu à bout de son rude adversaire sans la Roumanie, qui dépensait encore beaucoup moins. Il suffit enfin de jeter un coup d'œil sur les budgets russes et japonais dans la période qui a précédé la dernière guerre, pour trouver un troisième exemple qui confirme les deux premiers. Je ne veux pas dire, bien entendu, qu'il ne soit pas nécessaire de doter ses services de guerre ; mais je crois que c'est un patriotisme aussi insuffisant que fréquent, que celui qui se manifeste surtout aux dépens de la bourse des contribuables, et qui s'admire pour ses hauts faits, quand il a vidé le Trésor.

Il y a enfin un dernier élément d'incertitude, aussi considérable peut-être que tous les autres réunis. Le premier instrument de la victoire, c'est l'homme ; et l'homme change avec les circonstances. Le temps n'est plus ou l'on pouvait, à coups de trique, faire d'une créature humaine, souffrante et pensante, un mannequin mécanique parfaitement adapté aux besoins du champ de bataille : et je doute que, même au temps du grand Frédéric, ce genre de machines de chair et d'os eût suffi contre des soldats passionnés pour leur cause. L'énergie, l'élan, le courage, qui décuplent la valeur d'une troupe, dépendent d'une foule de circonstances, du caractère personnel d'un chef, de l'air ambiant, et surtout d'une situation morale. J'entends souvent dire que c'est en vain qu'on comptera sur la répugnance d'une

nation pour la guerre ou on l'engagerait : une fois envoyé au combat, le soldat marche et obéit. Oui, mais comment obéit-il ? Comment marche-t-il ? L'obéissance passive ne suffit pas sur le champ de bataille : il faut quelque chose de plus pour précipiter utilement des troupes sur l'ennemi. M. de Bismarck le savait bien ; lui, qui voulant nous attaquer, a su si habilement mettre l'apparence des torts du côté de l'Empire français, et provoqué aussi le mouvement de colère qui a entraîné l'Allemagne à la victoire. J'ai vu parfois le même homme à quelques semaines de distance, couard ou intrépide. Les mêmes troupes, suivant le vent qui souffle sur les esprits, se débandent, ou se montrent héroïques. Le regret d'être trainé à contre-cœur, vers des dangers auxquels on ne voit pas de motifs légitimes, d'un côté ; la colère de se voir attaqué, et la passion que l'on met à défendre sa maison, ses champs, sa liberté, de l'autre côté, pourraient avoir une fois de plus quelque influence sur le sort des batailles au détriment de l'agresseur.

Ce serait donc une étrange témérité et qui risquerait d'être impitoyablement châtiée par la destinée, que de prendre la responsabilité d'une guerre européenne, quelque confiance qu'on s'estime en droit d'avoir dans la supériorité de ses forces militaires. On peut, je crois, avoir la très solide espérance que l'humanité réussira à conserver la paix, à laquelle elle est passionnément attachée.

"Agatha Blount"

By Ella D'Arcy

It was July 27, "breaking-up day" at the Convent of the Immaculate Conception on Streatham Common. The prizes had been distributed by Dr. Wise, Bishop of South London, and the eighty girls, big and little, had departed to their homes with their parents or friends. Most of the children carried with them piles of incredibly dull books in vile bindings, but every child had received at least one book, although it were only a "consolation" prize. For this pleased the parents, and seemed some small return for the hundred guineas yearly which education at the Immaculate Conception cost.

The big class-rooms were empty, windows and doors stood open, the waxed and polished floors were littered with scraps of paper, torn exercise books, pens with broken nibs and nibbled handles, cracked slates and pieces of slate pencil. It was a tradition amongst the girls that the last day of the school year must be fêted by all the disorder forbidden in the course of it, and so the rows of battered desks, standing with open lids, showed chaos within, and Sister Marie des Anges, going round her own particular domain—the third-class room—foresaw many mid-day recreations spent in tidying up these desks and putting things straight again.

But she was not sorry for this, as for a long time her recreations with the Community had been hours of trial. For months past the elder nuns had sent her practically to Coventry, while, to the younger ones—her own contemporaries—to the novices, and to the children, she was strictly forbidden to speak of that which lay heavy on her mind. Yet she could not take an interest in anything else, nor could she cease to contrast her present treatment with the kindness shown her in former days. At one time she had been the favourite of the whole house. But this had been while old Reverend Mother was living, and before Sister Thérèse de la Sainte Croix had been transferred from Streatham to Montmirail.

Standing within the semicircle of desks in the big bow-

window of the schoolroom, the young nun showed a tall, slight figure whose long limbs and slender hips could be divined beneath the multiple folds of the black serge gown. The wimple, a sort of short circular cape of linen stiffly starched, concealed the bust, while a close linen cap tied beneath the chin was edged with a goffered frill that stood out all round the face two inches deep, and, seen sideways, entirely hid the profile. Below the cap, a linen band covered the forehead down to a quarter of an inch of the brow, and a big square of black veiling pinned to the top of the cap floated thence to hide the shape of the head, the attachment of the throat to the shoulders, the curve of the back, and the line of the waist.

Outside the window, on the lawns and flower-beds of the old-fashioned garden, glorious with summer sunshine, lay wonderful pieces of purple lace which shifted their position all day long, from west to east. The garden had been arranged in the days of George III., so that the closely shaven velvet lawns were already more than a century old. But the lace-makers, the mulberry-trees and chestnuts were much older still, and parents visiting the convent for the first time were agreeably impressed by this matured and spacious garden, in which they foresaw their little darlings at play. In reality, the little darlings were never allowed in this part of the grounds at all. They played in a big gravelled yard out of sight of the house.

The velvet lawns were sacred to the choir nuns, to Mother Superior, and to her guests. She and Dr. Wise were walking up and down them now. Sister Marie des Anges, glancing timidly out at the two slow-pacing, black figures, wondered whether they might not perhaps be talking of her. The momentous letter might have come from Rome . . . the Bishop might have brought it.

There was nothing to be learned from Reverend Mother's face. It was always the same, perfectly self-controlled, set in pious and suave lines. Habitually she held her head inclined over to the left, laughed rarely, and when she did so displayed yellow, irregular teeth. But the ghost of a smile glimmered perpetually round the corners of her mouth. Her small, dark eyes, set in a sallow face, had looked shrewdly at the world for over fifty years, but this faint ambiguous smile was the only indication of what she thought about it. To speak metaphorically, she never showed her hand, while as a matter of fact both her hands were generally hidden, being as now, crossed over and slipped up the wide sleeves of her habit, which is a conventual fashion.

The sunshine played upon the silver cross, fastened with a safety-pin in the centre of the wimple, and upon the snubby toes of her low thick shoes, which came in and out beneath the hem of her gown. A rosary of black wooden beads, big as hazel-nuts, hung from her girdle to below the knee, where the brass crucifix in which it terminated swayed slightly with every step.

Dr. Wise had been served tea in the guest-parlour, and a luscious kind of sponge and guava cake made in the convent, which he particularly appreciated. He was waiting now for his carriage and listening courteously to the lady's flow of words. Reverend Mother was French, and spoke always in that language. The Bishop had been partially educated at St. Omer, and would have welcomed the opportunity for removing some of the rust from the extremely untrustworthy lingual weapon he had there acquired. But Reverend Mother gave him no such chance. She talked herself all the time, snatched at his meaning before he had expressed it, and with a "Parfaitement, Monseigneur! Vous voulez dire que——" unfairly possessed herself of both sides of the conversation, and converted what might have been an excellent French exercise for him into a mere exercise of holy patience—a virtue which he found himself practising, of necessity, most hours of the day.

Sister Marie des Anges could hear the smooth, fluent voice of Reverend Mother every time their steps brought them near the house, and an occasional stumbling attempt on the Bishop's part to say his say, instantly quenched by the lady's, "Mais, parfaitement. Vous voulez dire, n'est-ce pas? . . ."

The first desk on the left-hand side of the window was Rhoda Hammond's. It had to be entirely cleared out, for Rhoda was not coming back. She had left with great reluctance, she insisted that she wished to become a nun, and she was tremendously "cracked after" Sister Marie des Anges. To be "cracked after" a nun was, in school-girl parlance, to be passionately fond of her, to follow her about with adoring eyes, to get as often as possible into personal contact with her, to treasure up every unconsidered trifle she had touched. It was to lose one's appetite if she spoke coldly, and to weep oneself sick if she were unkind.

There was scarcely a nun in the community who had not at least one "crack" amongst the girls, while the popular nuns had many. Sister Marie des Anges had never been without two or three, but Rhoda Hammond's was the most pronounced case. All that morning, all through the preceding day, Rhoda with red eyes and a red and swollen nose, had hung upon her

tracks, had seized her hand to fondle it surreptitiously, and to water it with her tears, had asserted over and over again her irrevocable intention of coming back to the Immaculate Conception so soon as ever her father would permit her to take the veil, and Sister Marie des Anges had listened in silence, and with extraordinarily mixed feelings. She was under the most stringent injunctions not to speak of what was on her mind, and yet if she must conceal her real sentiments, she did not know what she could say to the child at all.

But at least she could express her satisfaction that Mr. Hammond insisted on Rhoda remaining for one whole year "in the world." She herself had only been there for six weeks. She had been just eighteen years of age when she had gone back to Streatham at the end of the summer holidays to enter the Order as a postulant. Now she had been a nun for twelve years. Two years a novice at Montmirail, ten years a fully professed nun here.

A long time—and yet it seemed to her to have flown. To herself she seemed to be always young, to be always the identical Agatha Blount whom she had known so intimately as a child, as the young girl who lived still in her heart beneath wimple and habit, and the puzzle was that she was not the same, that all her hopes, wishes and ideas were diametrically different from those of the Agatha Blount of twelve years ago.

Rhoda's desk was a jumble of the most heterogeneous objects, torn papers, old letters, reels of cotton, empty *bonbonnières*, holy pictures, books, and a tangled mass of grimy sky-blue wool.

Agatha, glancing casually at each piece of paper she took out before crumpling it up to throw it into the waste-paper basket, read on one, "Dearest, darlingest Sister Marie des Anges, I am sure there can be no angel in Heaven so beautiful, so good, and so adorable as you. Dear Angel"—with three very black lines under the "dear,"—"I love you, and I wish you would not be so cold to me, and that you would always let me carry your Mass-book for you to chapel. Yesterday you gave it to Mary Parker."

Here the letter stopped abruptly, for the writer to try over and over again "Dear darling" and "Angelic Marie" in different hands and with different pens. Agatha was accustomed to finding letters from Rhoda in her place in chapel, in her desk, or in her bed, but these letters were written in a more restrained and decorous style. It was the letters that Rhoda did not send which overflowed thus with sentimentality. She remembered that she herself had been wont to write in much the same style

to Sister Thérèse de la Sainte Croix. She mused over the silliness of young girls, and wondered why no one taught them wisdom, but reflected that perhaps, as in her own case, those who knew were not allowed to speak.

Continuing her investigations in the desk, she came upon a frayed pink silk garter, a broken side-comb, a lump of rock-almond, and one of those circular mirrors in leaden frame and case which the elder girls carried always in their pockets.

Agatha was seized with the desire to see herself. It was long since she had deliberately looked in a glass. But glancing towards the garden, she saw the Reverend Mother and Dr. Wise at the edge of the lawn, close under the window. Their eyes were raised to her. Blushing guiltily, she bent her head over the desk, and waited until they should have turned. Then she opened the mirror case and looked in.

There was little to be seen. Just a pair of dark brows drawn straight and thin, above dark, liquid, timid eyes that swam on bluish whites, a straight nose, thin sensitive lips, and a smooth skin, which did not seem to have changed in the very least since her eighteenth year. Yet to-day she was thirty-one—thirty-one, three weeks and two days.

It was during her twenty-ninth year that her present trouble had begun. One day the thought occurred to her, "In two years I shall be thirty!" and suddenly it had seemed incredible and terrible that she, Agatha Blount, who had been young so long should, in another two years, have lost her youth for ever. For the thirtieth birthday appeared to her an inexorable turning-point. You were young up to thirty, after that you were young no longer. And thus, when more months had passed, and she said with a strange sinking of the heart, "Next month I shall be thirty!" something not herself had answered her, "Yes, and you have never lived!"

So had the trouble begun, but this question of age was not certainly its only cause. It was attached to a thousand intricate filaments, the windings of which she could not trace, it went down to obscure roots, planted perhaps years before, sprung perhaps from seeds sown generations back. And the strange thing was that while she knew herself to be the same Agatha Blount she had always been, nevertheless her whole outlook on life was changed—her whole soul, her whole mind were changed to the minutest particle. It was as if, during all the past years, she had been asleep and dreaming, but now at last was waking up to real life.

Shyness and hope, curiosity and surprise gazed back at her

from the dark eyes in the little mirror, but she did not know how to read them, she did not understand the face she saw. Between herself and her reflection there floated the web of all her wishes and all her fears. With a sigh over her helplessness, she slipped the mirror into a pocket beneath her gown, and went on tidying up.

The purple lace, spread over brilliant flower-bed and velvet lawn, had perceptibly lengthened and shifted far to the east. The crush of carriage wheels over the gravel in front of the house reached the ear. Sister Veronica, the portress, crossed the grass to inform the Bishop his carriage waited. Now the garden was empty and very silent, half the lawn was in shadow, and the school-room was filled with shadow and silence too. The small noise of shutting down the lid of Rhoda's desk reverberated through the room.

Agatha started at the click of the door handle, nervously dropping the books and papers which she held. Reverend Mother's voice came through the door ajar.

"Sister Marie des Anges!"

"Yes, Mother!"

"Will you come up to my room, please? I have something to tell you."

Agatha's forehead and hands grew wet with emotion and fear. The momentous letter from Rome must have come.

She followed, at a respectable distance, the spare black-robed figure up the broad shallow, carpetless stairs—over which, in former days, swords had clanked, and high heels had tappered—into the big room at the back of the house on the first floor, which once had been the chamber of some gay Georgian beauty, and was now Reverend Mother's private sanctum.

Through the slim doorway of the ancient "powder-closet" you saw her bed and toilet arrangements, in the outer room stood her big table-desk, her books, and her *prie-Dieu*, with the ebony and silver crucifix hung above it. On a shelf stood a row of japanned and white-lettered boxes, as in a solicitor's office.

In this room all matters of importance were conducted. Here heads of departments were interviewed, reprimands administered, and hither were conducted such heinous sinners among the children as no ordinary puishment might impress, no mere class-mistress terrify. And it was well known that, however haughty and defiant a child might be on entering that room, she would not emerge again until a condition of abasement and convulsive weeping had been reached. What took place between judge and culprit never transpired. It was a curious

fact that, once her tears were dried, the delinquent maintained on the subject an impenetrable silence.

The room had an uncurtained window of two immense sheets of plate glass, grey distempered walls, and a highly polished floor. There was no carpet. The only carpet in the whole convent was the Aubusson on the altar-steps in the chapel. But a mat, neatly and ingeniously made of cloth snippets, lay in front of every chair. The walls were decorated with two black-framed photographs of the exterior and interior of St. Peter's, and a highly coloured print of the Sacred Heart.

Five cane chairs were ranged severely round the walls, and a sixth one stood out facing the light, and Mother Superior's desk, which was placed sideways to the window. She motioned Agatha to this chair. Mother Superior sat at this table. She turned round on Agatha's entrance, and gazed at her in a direct and sapient way. And she continued to look at her thus, in complete silence, until the girl coloured painfully and her eyes wavered and fell. On which, apparently satisfied with this sign of submission, Reverend Mother began to speak.

"I have heard from Rome," she said, and Agatha, looking up involuntarily, uttered an eager little "Oh!"

"You are very anxious to leave us, dear child?" inquired Reverend Mother, sarcastic and suave.

Agatha's eyes filled with tears. "No, not that," she murmured. "But you know how I feel . . . that it is no longer possible . . ."

"We will not go into the question again, Sister; we have discussed it enough. I have told you already that such temptations are not peculiar to you, that you need not flatter yourself that you have an exceptional nature, nor an exceptional trial. Such trials and such temptations come to us all. I don't suppose there is a nun in religion who has not experienced them. So soon as the first years of ardour have gone by, the Devil suggests to us that we have made a mistake, that our vocation is not real, that the world has need of our life, our work, our abilities. Not a single *religieuse* who attains thirty years of age but goes through, sooner or later, this period of temptation. Were each weakly to succumb, every convent and monastery in the world would be emptied. It is the hour of Agony in the Garden permitted by God for the ultimate triumph of the soul, since it is only by resisting temptation that the soul acquires strength. Each of the nuns whom you know has found the grace to resist, and so sits secure and happy at the feet of the Bridegroom, having chosen, like Mary, the better part. But

you, my poor Sister, do not wish to resist—do you ? You prefer, like Martha, to busy yourself with the things of this world ? "

Hopeless tears began to roll down Agatha's cheeks. The auburn hair and beard of the " Sacred Heart " at which she gazed, the crimson blood-drops, the pink mantle and azure gown, liberally edged with gold, all sprang together into a rainbow blur. It was hopeless to argue with Reverend Mother. Never had she been able to do so. In spite of which inability, right through the last two dreadful years something not herself had driven her to repeat to her confessor, to her family, to each who questioned her that she was no longer happy, that she had mistaken her vocation, that she must go. To this resolution she had clung with the desperate courage of a gentle nature, and no one was more surprised than she at the tenacity with which she had held her own during the mortifications and brow-beatings of the last two years. Finally, because of her persistency it had become impossible to refuse her request for an appeal to the Holy Father to release her from her vows, and it was the result of this appeal that she was waiting now to hear.

After a pause, made rather for its dramatic effect than because she desired a reply, Reverend Mother continued :

" But what sort of a life awaits you in the world ? What place have you there ? What work ? Who wants you ? In your own home there is nothing for you to do. Your parents are wealthy, and don't need any help from their daughters, except in certain social duties for which your sisters are far better suited than you. You have five younger sisters ; two grown up and 'out,' three more growing up. Without any sin against holy charity on my part, or any lack of natural affection on theirs, I think we may take it for granted they have no very enthusiastic desire to have you home again. For twelve years now your sister Katie has been the eldest Miss Blount, and I suppose she is not eager to cede her place to you ? It is true she is about to be married, but there is Carrie, already twenty-three or twenty-four, is she not ? and so quite ready to step into Katie's shoes. Besides, how are you going to mix in society, to which you are so unaccustomed ? How are you going to make yourself happy in it ? I fear, my poor child, some very bitter deceptions await you. People are naturally shy of a professed nun who has had to get released from her vows. The position speaks for itself of lightness of character, inconstancy and caprice. Who could repose any confidence in a woman

who, after twelve years' service in the House of God, goes out to serve—I do not say the Devil and the Flesh, God forbid!—but at least the World, and who, after being the affianced Bride of Christ, puts off her ring and lays aside her marriage garments to take up with the poor rags and baubles of a worldly life? You will be looked on with suspicion by those who know your story, and when your name is mentioned to strangers, there will follow the explanatory word. For you may believe me, wherever we go, there our past goes with us. We can no more escape it than we can our shadows. It is projected from us as inevitably as our shadow is projected in the sunshine."

Agatha's tears now fell so fast that the starched and goffered frill beneath her chin was getting limp and out of shape. She fumbled for her handkerchief, found it at last—large and coarse as a dish-cloth—and, hiding her face in it, wept miserably.

There was silence. Reverend Mother was perhaps placated by this bending of the neck beneath the yoke of tears. Agatha, in spite of her distress, heard the opening of a drawer and the rustle of note-paper taken from an envelope.

Resolutely she wiped her eyes, squeezing her handkerchief up into a tight pad between her trembling hands.

"I think it only right to put these considerations again before you, Sister, because the answer from Rome has come. I have it here."

"Dr. Wise brought it to-day? I guessed he had done so," Agatha murmured.

"You guessed wrong, then. I have had it over ten days, but with the examinations taking place, I thought it best to say nothing that might distract your mind."

At this, Agatha was revolted. It seemed to her cruel beyond measure of Reverend Mother to have concealed this news from her for ten whole days, after the long weeks and months that she had waited for it in the tortures of suspense. Her thoughts were reflected as in a mirror upon her child-like face.

Reverend Mother smiled that evanescent, ungenial smile of hers, which always left a permanent ghost of itself hovering round the corners of her mouth.

"You are very eager to leave us," she repeated, "though perhaps the day will come when you will be as eager to return. Our Blessed Lord deals with us always far better than we deserve. However, what I have now to say to you is this." She glanced over the letter she held in her hand. Then: "The Holy Father, while deploring as much as does our dear Bishop, as does your Director, and as do we all, your unhappy desire to go back into

the world, nevertheless permits it for the prevention of a worse scandal."

Agatha gave a little cry, scandalised at the word.

"Would it not be a worse scandal to have you here against your will? We no longer live in the Middle Ages, unfortunately—those holy, happy centuries of discipline and faith—and you would be pining and planning to get away all the time. But the Holy Father, in his wisdom and kindness, has determined not to release you entirely and irrevocably from your vows for the present. He grants you instead a year's dispensation, during which period you may leave the convent, lay aside your habit, and live in the world exactly as worldlings do. At the year's end, if you still persist in being of the same mind, you must make another application to Rome to have your vows cancelled."

Reverend Mother broke off abruptly, to say in tones of compassionate condescension: "I see you are already, my poor child, making that application in spirit?"

Agatha, confounded by such prescience, and unable to deny its truth, blushed to the forehead-band, felt the heat creeping up to the roots of her hair, and down her throat and neck.

Reverend Mother watched her with pleasure, savouring the spectacle a long moment, before speaking again.

"However, the future is in God's hands, and we—poor, frail creatures—have not to concern ourselves with it, but simply to do our duty in the present. In this particular instance the duty of us all is to keep your departure as quiet as possible. The children on their return will be told nothing about you, and your sister, Lucy, will not come back here, but is to go to the Assumption Convent in Kensington Square. You are to leave the day after to-morrow. Lady Blount cannot spare the carriage before then. You must be ready by three o'clock on Friday afternoon, and I wish you to go up to your cell immediately after dinner, and to wait there until you are sent for. You are not to say any good-byes to your companions. Those who know of the affair could hardly wish you well, and those who do not know of it are best left in ignorance. I myself, Sister, will say good-bye to you here and now, and I will pray that the Holy Spirit may restore you to the light."

She rose and stood prepared to bestow the perfunctory kiss of religion upon Agatha's cheeks.

Agatha rose too, her mind whirling. So her mother had known! Yet she had parted from her mother, who had driven down from town to assist at the prize-giving and take Lucy home, hardly two hours before, and Lady Blount had not said

one kind, encouraging word to her concerning her home-coming, had treated her as she had always treated her since this tribulation had begun, with a detached coolness, suggestive of an inimical point of view. She felt it was extraordinarily unkind of her mother to have said nothing at all.

Then another idea occurred to her. How could she go away in her habit? And she had no other clothes. She timidly made the objection, but Reverend Mother met it at once.

"Everything has been arranged. Some clothes of your sisters' were sent for you some days ago. The box will be put in your cell on Friday, and no one need see you after you have put aside the habit. The hour has been purposely arranged when the Community will be at Compline. You will leave everything in your cell, including your rosary, cross"—the speaker lightly touched the silver cross on Agatha's bosom with a long and polished forefinger nail—"and ring. All you may take with you is your Mass-book and Book of Office. You will probably wish to say your Office every day, although you understand you are under no obligation to do so. You are perfectly free. And now, there is the bell for Vespers. We will go down. Be so good as to keep yourself under perfect control between now and Friday. Let there be no tears, and, above all, no confidences. Adieu, ma bonne enfant. Que la Sainte Vièrge vous garde et vous nous ramène."

The cold kisses were given and received, and Agatha followed Reverend Mother to the chapel, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, finding her way automatically as a somnambulist walks in a dream.

Sister Marie des Anges entered her cell for the last time, a small, square room, one of many, opening upon a stone corridor. Corridor and cells were built in the new wing of the house above the Chapel, and the corridor windows looked over to the opposite wing, which consisted of the children's refectories and dormitories. But the cell windows, turned the other way, gave only upon the wood-yard, some out-buildings, and some elm-trees.

Every cell was furnished exactly alike with a narrow bed, an iron tripod washstand, a deal table, deal *prie-Dieu*, and deal chair. A holy-water stoup hung just within the door, a crucifix and piece of blessed palm above the bed's head. The only individual touch permitted was in the choice and arrangement of "Holy Pictures," which the nuns fastened to the wall above the *prie-Dieu* by means of drawing-pins. A reasonable number was allowed, and seven, or at most nine, reached the limit of

reason. But the novice who papered one entire wall with seventy-five of these lace-edged inanities saw them all confiscated, and herself condemned to a week's discipline.

When Agatha entered her cell on that Friday afternoon, she found a big cardboard box on the table, and she opened it with strange trepidation. It contained the clothes she was to put on to go home in, and she took out the articles one by one, and examined them anxiously.

First, there was a petticoat of bright green silk, with little frills up to the knee. Then a soft unlined grey woollen gown, with a blouse bodice of the same stuff. It was open at the neck like a man's coat, with a roll collar and lapels, and so there was a separate little chemisette affair of white lace to be worn inside. A three-cornered hat of black and white grenadine had a pair of bright green wings fixed across the back.

She remembered that Katie had come to the Convent one Sunday in this hat and the grey frock more than a year ago, and she was conscious that the sleeves were out of fashion.

Women have an extraordinary and apparently intuitive knowledge of the vagaries of fashion, even although they be immured in a convent or prison. Agatha knew that sleeves were no longer worn full at the wrist.

She was impatient to see how she looked in the hat, and removed her veil, cap and forehead band. But she found it impossible to hold the hat on with one hand and see comfortably in the tiny circular glass which she held in the other. She must manage in some way to fix the glass up against the wall.

Her gaze fell on her "Holy Pictures," on her Saint Louis Gonzague, her St. Stanislas, her Saint Sebastian, her womanish Christs, with, in one instance, a Beloved Disciple, long-haired and girlish, lying on the Master's bosom. She unpinned them all, and with the strongest pin fixed up the little three-inch mirror in their place.

But still the hat refused to sit at the right angle, nor would it stay where she placed it. Katie had forgotten to send hat-pins, or perhaps had remembered that with no hair, hat-pins would be superfluous.

She wondered what she should do, and looking round her perplexedly, caught sight of the piece of black elastic which went twice round her Missal, sewn to the neat black cashmere cover, with which nuns protect the bindings of their books. She ripped it, with a sense of sacrilege, and sewed it in her hat.

Now she looked at herself again in the glass, and blushed at the brazen, shameless face she saw. Where the goffered cap had

been tied beneath the chin appeared a white and naked throat. Where the coif had hidden everything down to the brows was naked forehead and dark hair, three-quarters of an inch long, curling prettily. On her head, in place of the veil, was poised the jaunty black and white hat. The tips of the green wings stuck out on either side.

But her watch, lying on the table, showed the long hand already at eight, the short hand close on three. It was more than an hour since she had come up from the Refectory, she had not yet begun to dress, and in another twenty minutes the carriage was to come. She again removed the hat, and set to work more methodically. Taking off wimple and habit, she folded the latter, laid both upon the bed, and prepared to re-dress herself completely. But neither shoes nor stockings had been sent. She must go away, therefore, in the thick woollen stockings and stout shoes of the convent. Their much worn, rounded toes, appearing beneath the edge of her smart gown, looked absurd, and seemed to speak loudly of her treachery to Christ and her repudiated vows. While she contemplated them there came a warning knock at the door. It was opened two inches and the voice of Sister Rose was heard reciting the first part of the "Hail Mary!" When Agatha had responded with the second part, the lay sister came in, and seeing Sister Marie des Anges so strangely apparelled, began to giggle.

She was a red-cheeked, country girl, wearing goffered cap, coif and wimple like the choir nuns, but with no veil, and her habit was of coarse grey homespun, instead of fine black serge.

She stared at Agatha from round eyes, half shocked and wholly delighted, was on the point of bursting into laughter, caught herself up, and clapped a big red hand over her mouth. Then she seemed to remember that the woman before her had forfeited all respect, for she said with familiarity: "Lor', I should never have known you! You do look worldly, to be sure! Don't you feel funny in them fal-lals? And feathers and all in your hat! Well, I should die of shame!"

She circled round Agatha, a prey to fascination and horror, and forgot what she had come for.

Agatha was ready to sink through the ground with humiliation. She was conscious she looked ridiculous. Her neck, her face, her head felt bare. She missed every instant the comfortable pressure of the concealing linen, the flow of the veil, the wide sleeves in which she could hide her hands, the warmth of the pleated habit round her waist. She felt thin, cold and indecent in this clinging grey skirt, and shrank from the idea of having

to go out of her cell, of being seen thus by others as well as by Sister Rose.

The girl now remembered her errand. "Lady Blount's carriage is here," she said. "You're to come down at once, please."

Agatha gave a last look round the familiar cell. It was unfamiliar already, strangely changed. The cardboard box and its lid lay upon the floor, the holy pictures were gone from the wall, her convent clothes strewed the blue bed-quilt. Heaped together on the table were girdle, rosary, silver cross and silver ring, the insignia of her past dignity and happiness. Her big white-faced silver watch ticked beside them. The Christ from the crucifix over the bed seemed to regard her with mournful eyes.

She was suddenly filled with wild regret, and if by a wish she could again have found herself in the habit, it would have been accomplished, and she would have slipped down to join the Community at Compline with immense relief and joy.

But with her own hand she had put away such gracious joys for ever. Now she must walk forward along her self-elected road. For the last time she dipped her fingers into the stoup of holy water, crossed herself and followed Sister Rose along the vacant corridors, which smelt strongly of beeswax and cleanliness, down the polished staircase, and into the great hall paved with black and white marble where Sister Veronica, the portress, stood waiting with the keys.

On Sister Veronica's withered face, which was small and brown, and shrivelled like a russet apple in the spring, there was nothing but disapproval. She had been fifty years in religion, and this was the first time she had been required to unlock the convent doors to permit a professed nun to go back into the world. No doubt she too, like Reverend Mother, regretted the Middle Ages when her services might have been required for a ceremony of a very different kind.

Through the plate-glass panels Agatha saw the brougham with the wooden-faced coachman, a monument of patience, on the box, and Bessie, the foam-flecked, pawing brown horse, fretted into a simulation of mettle and long pedigree by a bearing-rein tightly braced back. Behind the carriage waved the silver birch-trees, the lilac and laburnum bushes of the shallow, semicircular drive, at either end of which open gates gave flashes of that world on whose brink Agatha stood frightened yet allured, as a timid bather stands on the rocks of safety and considers the sea.

The convent hall was very silent. At the end of it the garden door, of glass too, showed nothing but a green shade. A tiny flame burned in a red glass before the statue of the Blessed Virgin, which stood on a pedestal half-way down the hall. A bowl of freshly gathered roses, placed at the Virgin's feet, scented the whole air.

Agatha and the two nuns looked at one another in silence. She felt lonely and abandoned, and it seemed to her ignominious to steal away in this furtive fashion. Had the whole Community been there, were it only to condemn her, it would have been less disconcerting and strange.

She offered Sister Rose, with timidity, the conventual salute. Choir nuns do not kiss the lay sisters except on great occasions, such as when they are received into religion . . . and perhaps when they leave it again.

But when she turned to do the same by Sister Veronica, the old nun was ostentatiously busy with her keys. Agatha was too shy to make further advances, and the other, having unlocked the door, stood back.

"Good-bye, Sister!" was all Agatha ventured to say, and Sister Veronica answered, "May the Blessed Virgin, whom you have abandoned, Sister, never abandon you! I shall remember you in my prayers for all poor strayed and troubled souls!"

Agatha had not taken her seat in the brougham before the convent door was shut and locked behind her, and when she looked back both Sisters Veronica and Rose had vanished. There was no sign of life within the convent, there was no one to be seen. She glanced right along the hall and out into the garden beyond, and both appeared empty and desolate, and all the desolation was centred in her own soul.

When the carriage drew up in Cromwell Road she got out, trembling with nervousness, and forgot to shut the brougham door. The coachman reminded her of it. More nervous than ever, she stood absolutely tongue-tied when the smart parlour-maid appeared, in answer to her bell. But the well-trained servant, after waiting the regulation half-second for the lady to speak, came to her aid.

"Lady Blount wishes me to say that it is her At Home day, and she is engaged with visitors upstairs, but if you'll come this way, miss, I'll show you your room."

She led Agatha to a small room at the end of the hall, that had been hastily arranged for her reception. A bed stood behind the door. The requisite bedroom furniture overcrowded

the rest of the space. Thick festoons of virginia creeper darkened the French window, which opened upon a flight of stone steps and a London back garden, given over to sooty sparrows and predatory cats. The maid, offering to return with a cup of tea, went away, and Agatha was left alone.

A can of warm water, covered with a folded towel, lay in the basin. She washed her hands for the sake of something to do. She had unpacked her little parcel of toilet necessaries, and had laid out upon the dressing-table her Missal and Book of Office. Now, sitting down with her back to the looking-glass, she tried to read over her Office, to pass the time.

But she could not fix her attention. She felt restless and unsettled. She got up, opened the door, and strained her ears for some encouraging sound of life. She heard voices on the drawing-room floor, the rustle of silk petticoats descending the stairs, steps along the hall, and the noise of the street door shutting, as the visitors left the house.

She went back to her seat, leaving the door ajar. The maid had evidently forgotten the tea, and presently it seemed to Agatha that she had been sitting there for hours. Then she went out to stand upon the garden steps, and watch the sky redden above the roofs of the mews.

In the convent garden at Streatham the sun would be setting more beautifully behind the trees. . . . A key turned in the hall door. She heard her father's heavy step and cheery voice.

"Hullo, Fletcher! What's the meaning of all these books and coats and things littering the hall? Given Miss Blount the cloak-room, have you? Where is she?"

Agatha came to greet her father, who took her cordially in his arms and warmly kissed her cheeks.

"So I've got my eldest daughter back again? Very glad, my dear, I'm sure. Seen your mother and the girls? Visitors? At this hour? Fletcher, who's in the drawing-room? Mrs. Trevor. Oh, only your Aunt Carrie. Come up and see your aunt!"

The drawing-room door was wide open, and over the thick stair-carpets their footsteps fell unheard.

Lady Blount stood exchanging last words with her sister. Agatha heard her say with bitterness, "I call it a disgrace!"

Mrs. Trevor demurred. "Well, hardly a disgrace, but certainly a misfortune."

The listener blushed miserably, as Mrs. Trevor caught sight of her.

"Why, here *is* Agatha! How d'y do, Charlie?" She

gave a hand to her brother-in-law, kissed her niece, and holding her at arm's-length, examined her with kindly curiosity.

"How strange the child looks, to be sure! That cropped head!" she laughed. "Unrecognisable! But"—with an amiable envy—"absurdly young—she looks younger than Carrie, I declare! She might be Ted in girl's clothes! Ah, you won't keep that freshness long, now you're back in the world, my dear. And what was it, I wonder, that made you first wish to come out?"

She released her to pass her on to Lady Blount, who kissed her coldly.

"You'll have to do something with your head—wear a wig, I suppose. I couldn't possibly have you going about like that. You look as if you had just come out of hospital, or prison. Besides, we don't want to advertise our shame!"

"Pooh! Shame!" repeated Sir Charles. "What nonsense. Do be reasonable, Polly! You're not going to set yourself up as being wiser than the Pope? Agatha has his permission to come out, and there's nothing more to be said."

He patted her kindly on the back, and again assured her he was very glad to have her home.

Lady Blount shrugged silk-clad shoulders. She was a handsome woman, handsomely dressed. Her faded light brown hair, arranged in loose bandeaux, was much crimped, to make up for its lost luxuriance. She had the straight Gerard features and thin mouth which she had given to most of her daughters.

Alluding to them, and commenting on her husband's last words, she said witheringly: "With five on your hands already!"

"Oh, well, Agatha won't compete with them, anyway!"

Mrs. Trevor understood both points of view, and desired to administer consolation all round. "She'll be a help, a great help, I'm sure! She'll be as good as and better than a governess for the younger ones. I expect by the time you're back from Folkestone I shan't know that unruly younger crew. Sister Marie des Anges will have turned them all into model children. Well, Polly, I must go, and I don't see you again until October. Fred and I start to-morrow. Good-bye, young people!"

She threw her voice into the recesses of the back drawing-room, where the tea-table still displayed its crumpled pieces of cake and last slice of bread and butter. Two tall young ladies, with a lanky, smiling youth, came forward, and these also kissed Agatha in the perfunctory way of families, where kisses are an obligatory rite, to be got over as lightly and quickly as possible.

The elder of the two girls, Carrie, put even less warmth into

her kiss than she might have done, had she not overheard her aunt's remark on the youthfulness of Agatha's appearance. But that Agatha, who was eight years her senior, should be said to look younger than she did, constituted a crime on her sister's part difficult to forgive.

The smiling youth, whose name was Edward, had likewise been solely struck by Mrs. Trevor's reference to himself.

"I should hope I don't look like Aggie," said he, and jingled softly the coins in the pockets of his trousers. "I should look very rummy if I did."

"You remember, mother, we're dining earlier to-night because of the theatre?" Carrie observed. She gave a complacent glance into a mirror near at hand, and caressing little pats to her hair.

"What theatre?" Sir Charles wanted to know.

"Bernard Goldney has sent a box at the Haymarket for four, and mother's going to take me and Katie, and he's to meet us there," Carrie explained; and Lady Blount commented: "A very stupid arrangement. He had much better have dined here, and have gone with us. He's out with Katie now, and must bring her home first, which will give him very little time to get to Cleveland Gardens, and dress and dine."

Man-like, Ted flew to discomfit his mother, and defend his sex. "But how *could* Goldney dress here? In the governor's togs—or in mine, perhaps? Or, should he have worn dress-clothes on the river? Or would you like him to go to the theatre in flannels?"

He might have continued his interrogatories, but that Mary Frances, the younger girl, broke eagerly in upon him with: "Oh, mother, before you go, do tell Ted he must take me and Moghey round to the Nolans' this evening. Gwen has asked us in after dinner. They're going to dance."

"You're quite capable of taking yourselves," declared Ted very sweetly.

"But they want you to go. Gwen Nolan——"

"I shouldn't dance anyway——"

An animated wrangle broke out between the two. Ted, still vindicating his liberty of action, made strategic retreat towards the door, and his sister followed, pressing her point.

His gentle voice was heard, saying from the stairs: "You may beg, you may pray, you may coax, you may threaten, but you don't catch me going over to Porchester Terrace to-night."

"By-the-by, Polly," said Sir Charles, "have you spoken to Hitchen's yet about the conservatory? I want that seen to

before you leave town, otherwise you'll never be satisfied. Wait a moment, Carrie; I'm coming down to see you out."

"I don't know whether to wear my black and white, or the violet chiffon?" Lady Blount observed to her daughter Caroline. "The chiffon's the most suitable, but that owl of a Sparkes has sewn the lace in the wrong way. Instead of the lapels hanging forwards, *so*, as they ought, she has turned them back. Come up to give me your advice."

Agatha found herself standing in the middle of the room, alone for the second time since her return home. She felt unwanted and forlorn.

She had plenty of time that evening and during the days which followed to meditate over her aunt's question: "What was it that first made you want to come out?"

Mrs. Trevor had not waited for the answer, nor could Agatha have given it.

There was the death of the old Superior, and the arrival of the new one, and with the new one Agatha had never felt herself in sympathy. Almost the first thing Reverend Mother did was to get Sister Thérèse de la Sainte Croix transferred to Montmirail. Agatha's grief over the separation could not be concealed, and Reverend Mother, while collecting—so to speak—each little bit of evidence of it, would watch the young nun with her enigmatic smile.

One day there had been a talk of other changes, and the nuns had expressed their personal hopes and fears. Agatha exclaimed impulsively she wished she might be sent to Montmirail, as then she would again be with Sister Thérèse. She could have bitten her tongue off next moment when Reverend Mother's eyes met hers, and she saw in them a flicker of satisfaction, prefacing the pronouncement: "It is not likely, my child, that Mother General will ever put you again under the same roof as Sister Thérèse. She might easily have become for you an occasion of sin. You must be on your guard against attaching yourself overmuch to the creature instead of to the Creator. A good *religieuse* gives her entire affection to God."

Agatha could still see, as in a picture, the hard face inside the border of immaculate white frill which made the skin look so sallow, and the small eyes, shrewd and sly, in which flickered an unkind satisfaction.

She had not realised how little she had liked Reverend Mother until now that she had left her. Perhaps it was as much to escape from her jurisdiction as for any other reason that she had

first wished to come out. But no, she knew this was not so. She knew that her action had been inspired less by the evil which she wished to avoid, than by the good which she wished to obtain, the definite and tremendous joy which in secret she coveted.

While she sat in the drawing-room of Cromwell Road with a band of needlework in her fingers, while she walked with her sisters in Kensington Gardens, she would gaze in front of her with unseeing eyes, and dreaming of this great joy, she would feel the hot colour travel over her face and neck and arms, for she was not sure that her wish were not a sin.

She remembered perfectly how and when it had first come to her, and another picture rose before her, that of an April morning in the convent garden two years ago, a heavenly day, when the scented snows of spring lay thick upon the apple-tree and hawthorn, and white and pink petals lay strewn upon the grass. The tumultuous sparrows filled the air with bird-talk, and the serener blackbird or thrush snatched now and again five minutes from nest-building to enchant his young bride with some jewelled song. A wind of awakened life blew through the garden which had lain asleep for months, and in the air was the fragrance and stimulus of the beauty which intoxicates.

Agatha, walking on the outskirts of the little crowd of nuns that hung about Reverend Mother as bees about their queen, felt a stir in her blood that was half pleasure, wholly pain. She had often felt it before, and always on some such exquisite day as this. Her whole nature seemed to open wide to the beauty of the world, and this constituted the pleasure—the desire for even greater joy, for something unknown, something which never could be hers; succeeding this moment of ecstasy came the pain, a sharp pain which filled her eyes with tears.

On that particular April morning she had walked in silence beside Sister Philomène of the Five Wounds, who herself was divided by another nun from the person of Reverend Mother. To be immediately on the right or left of Reverend Mother was the most eagerly sought privilege of the Community.

During the hour of recreation no private talk was allowed. Reverend Mother provided the subject, and the Community was expected to converse on it, or to keep silence.

To-day conversation had reached the absorbing topic of miracles, to which there was not a nun but could contribute at least from hearsay some well-authenticated tale. Sister Anastasia, a novice from Bruges, related the case of a child who, prompted by the Devil, secretly removed the Sacred Host

from her tongue after Holy Communion, wrapped It in her pocket-handkerchief, and found an opportunity to bury It in the garden. Next morning a rose-tree covered with crimson roses was found growing from the spot. The authorities of the convent naturally suspected that something was wrong, since the month was December, and no rose-tree had ever been known in that part of the garden before. They caused, therefore, the mysterious bush to be pulled up by the roots, whereupon the Blessed Wafer was discovered, sticking to a rootlet, while a sinister chasm opened in the ground, about a yard in diameter, and of unfathomable depth. On the advice of the chaplain every individual of the household, from the Superior down to the youngest child, was invited to jump across this chasm, and all got across in safety until it came to the turn of the sacrilegious communicant, who missed her spring, fell in, and instantly the earth closed above her for ever.

Agatha, forced to listen to this story in spite of herself, was filled with irritation at its puerility. She sighed; if only she might go and walk by herself out of hearing. She looked with wistfulness down the solitary glades of the garden.

She perceived two women emerge from a side path, and advance towards the group of nuns with evident intention. These were Maggie MacKellar and her mother, Mrs. Ryan, who did some of the dressmaking for the school.

All the nuns were interested in Maggie. She had been educated in their middle-class day school, for which there was a special building in another part of the grounds. Assisted by pupil-teachers, the nuns took it in turn to teach there, and pretty Maggie Ryan, with her sunny disposition and delightful Irish smile, had been the show-girl of her class.

Therefore it had made a great sensation in the community when it had come to be known a year ago that Maggie was marrying MacKellar, the Scotch gardener, a widower, middle-aged, highly respectable. But this sensation was slight compared to the thrill produced ten months later when Maggie's baby was first presented to the nuns. John MacKellar, junior, had been an object of absorbing interest to them ever since, and now, as first one and then another caught sight of the bundle of lace and cambric in Maggie's arms, the foolish story was forgotten, the knot of women round Reverend Mother shook loose, and a general movement was made in the direction of the visitors.

The proud young mother was encircled by goffered caps and black veils and, for the moment, all the nuns were normal natural women, deeply concerned in the perusal of a small human

document. Maggie lifted the bit of net from the baby's face, and each looked with delight at the wide-open, unwinking dark blue eyes, at the incredibly fine brows and lashes, at the incomparably soft hair. There were ecstatic comments.

"Oh, Maggie! How he grows!"

"What a perfect darling!"

"Did you ever see anything so sweet!"

"Oh, Reverend Mother, do look! He's holding on to my finger quite tight!"

Every nun claimed to hold the baby in turn, and he with complacency allowed himself to be transferred from one to another, while he clawed ineffectually at the cap frills, blew bubbles and smiled.

The last to receive him was Agatha, and for this reason she was able to hold him the longest. Reverend Mother had led her flock from the lawn to the sunny benches of the still leafless rosery, where Mrs. MacKellar was given the place of honour on her right. For the Brides of God, with a natural inconsistency, are always found to pay marked deference to the Brides of Man. The condition of the widow or the virgin finds less favour in their eyes. Presently, as Agatha still held the child, the warmth of the little body began to penetrate through her thick habit, she began to feel it against her, warmer than herself. A sensation, novel, mysterious, undefinable, stirred at her heart, and she was terrified. She leaned her burning face down to the child's to conceal her emotion, and hungrily kissed the little head and face. Perhaps she pressed him too hard, or merely frightened him, for he set up a vigorous howl, and almost wriggled himself out of her arms.

Maggie Ryan flew to take him, rocked him against her bosom, soothed him with lovely nonsense, and Reverend Mother—looking at Agatha with her faint censorious smile—remarked that the baby did not appear to approve of Sister Marie's amateur nursing. Then she rose, and the party broke up.

The nuns dispersed to their different duties, Agatha to take her class. But she realised at last what it was that she desired—she wanted a child, she thirsted for the joy of possessing a child of her own, of laying its scented downy head against her breast. And a chill passed over her soul as she remembered that in less than two years she would be thirty, while Something not herself whispered: "Yes, and then your youth will have gone and you will never have lived."

Agatha, when clothed in her habit and within the convent walls, had been conscious that this wish was a sin. But even

now that she was out in the world, with the acquisition of her final freedom depending on herself alone, she was not sure that the wish were permissible. Nor had she the courage to consult a living soul. Long before formulating the wish into words she must have died of shame. But she knew that it lay there at the bottom of her heart, that it was her secret hope of realising it which had driven her out into the world.

After the first month of home life Agatha began to discover that Reverend Mother's prescience had not been at fault. No one seemed to want her. Her father was always busy, her mother unsympathetic, and her sisters, although not unkind, were each one engrossed in her own affairs.

When the holidays were over the three younger children were sent off to school, Lucy to begin her first term in Kensington Square, Bob back to Stoneyhurst, and the Babe, who had reached the dignity of an eighth birthday, to taste life's realities at Hodder.

There remained nothing for Agatha to do. She did not know how to employ her days. She missed the set tasks of the convent, the regular hours. Now, when she had heard Mass in the morning at the Oratory, or the Carmelite, when she had recited the Office of the Immaculate Conception, her duties were over, and she had hardly disposed of two hours. Fourteen or fifteen hours remained to kill in futilities, and while thus wearisomely engaged, her thoughts turned continually towards her one aspiration to have a home of her own, to have children, to be married.

Of this desire she never spoke to a human being, scarcely even admitting it to herself, but it hid deep in her heart, wherein at the same time the conviction grew that there was no one waiting to marry her, that there were hundreds of girls younger and prettier than she, all keen on getting husbands, and understanding the rules of the game far better than she did. These had developed, had gained some experience, while she had remained, in body and mind, a convent girl of eighteen. Her knowledge of the world was no greater now than then, and at eighteen it had been a nebulous misknowledge made up of sentimentality garnered from the few novels she had been permitted to read, of the stray opinions she had heard from her elders, and of the wrong constructions she had put upon their actions and their attitude towards life.

Agatha knew nothing of men, and her ideas concerning them were far-fetched and erroneous. She had generally heard them

alluded to as sheep might allude to ravening wolves. How to avoid them, how to guard against them, how to defeat their machinations, these mysterious necessities never openly discussed before her were constantly hinted at in mysterious fashion. And as a deduction from these premises, to have found herself anywhere alone with a man—even for five minutes—would have paralysed Agatha with embarrassment and fear.

At the same time, from poetry to fiction, she had derived another set of ideas equally absurd. Thus, she imagined that when a man wished to marry a woman he conducted himself like the knights of old, and welcomed everything at her hands, even affronts and unkindnesses. Indeed, from very maidenliness a really "nice" girl would be compelled to make him suffer. For instance, she must not admit that she cared about him, but must treat him with coldness and scorn, otherwise how could she be sure he was not merely trying to entrap her? But the real, true knight would return. And after she had probed his constancy and devotion in various ways, she would permit him to kiss her hand. Which would be the only kiss ever permitted. Any other sort came under the heading of "not nice."

Once, as a mere baby, she had attempted to press her little mouth against her mother's. But her mother had pushed it aside. "It's disgusting to touch another person with your mouth! Turn your cheek. There! That's the nice way to kiss!" From that day onward Agatha's kisses had been simply a cheek laid against a cheek, and a kiss given to the air. But when she went, at eight years old, to Streatham Convent, the nuns kissed her on the forehead, and when she, too, found herself a nun, she kissed the children in the same way, touching the centre of their foreheads with her lips. This was all she knew of kissing at the age of thirty-two, and she never imagined anything warmer.

The first time she had seen Bernard Goldney kiss Katie she had experienced a disagreeable emotion. He did not kiss his *fiancée* "nicely" at all, but as though he really enjoyed it. Agatha was scandalised that Katie should take such a kiss as a matter of course. But Carrie's ill-disguised eagerness to be with any sort of a man, her animation when talking to one, although so moody and taciturn with her own people, her undignified efforts to please him, scandalised Agatha even more.

As for Mary Frances, with the shameless candour of sixteen, she blurted out every sentiment that her older sisters hid, and no man crossed the Blounts' orbit whom "M. F." did not discuss in the light of a possible husband for herself or the others.

The two preliminary points to be determined about him were if he were unmarried, and if he were of the true faith. "Is he a bachelor?" "Is he a Catholic?" were her invariable inquiries. Should the first question be answered in the negative, she took no further interest in him at all, but if he turned out to be a bachelor, and *not* a Catholic, she loudly lamented this drawback to eligibility. In the happy event of his being a Catholic and unmarried, she took him metaphorically to her heart.

The prettiest of the four was Margaret, who had the straightest features, the largest eyes, a more generous mouth than the others. In character she was placid and serene. Her silence made a striking contrast to Carrie's volubility when the latter had slipped into her "company manners," but when the family was alone Margaret's silence was an amiable silence arising from nothing to say, and Carrie's was an irritable silence because there was no one worth speaking to. Lady Blount showed more interest in Margaret than in her other daughters, cherishing hopes that the child would make a really good marriage, superintending her choice of frocks, and concerning herself with her amusements and occupations at home.

With Agatha, who represented no possible brilliant future, but instead a lamentable present, tarnishing the dignity of the past, the mother's only direct relations arose when there was some tedious job on hand, which her maid was too lazy or too incompetent to undertake. She would say then: "There is a whole pile of silk stockings, Agatha, lying on my bed to be mended. I wish you would see to them! Sparkes darns so clumsily, I can never wear a stocking she has touched."

Agatha was humbly pleased that she could darn better than Sparkes, was grateful to her mother for the task, and still more for the faint implication of praise.

On a certain evening in November a tall young lady, coming down the staircase in the Blounts' house, met on the half-way landing between two floors a similarly tall young lady in evening-dress, with elaborately waved hair. In one hand the apparition carried gloves and a fan, with the other she lifted her white gown, that the edge might not fray out through sweeping the stairs. A similar thrifty habit had been impressed on Agatha during the years of her noviciate. Suddenly she realised that she was looking at her own image in the glass. The sight of her bare neck and arms disconcerted her. She considered them indecent, and yet it had been her own wish to have a real evening-frock.

Katie had been married at the Oratory that morning, and when a dance had been first proposed and planned as a desirable wind-up to the wedding festivities, Agatha had timidly expressed this wish. Her mother had thrown cold water upon it, but her father had come to the rescue, telling her to order what she wanted and to send the bill to him.

Katie had taken her to Madame Elise, who was making the trousseau, and Madame Elise and Katie together had insisted that a low dress must be really a low dress, and that it would be absurd not to show the whole of so plump and pretty a neck. In the garish daylight of Madame Elise's fitting-room, with that lady making devastating gashes at arm-hole and bosom, a haughty assistant damsel handing pins, and Katie as spectator, Agatha, contemplating her own nakedness in triple glasses, was ready to sink through the floor with shame. Nevertheless, she let them have their will, understanding obscurely that some exhibition of herself was a necessary step to the accomplishment of her heart's desire.

In the big, completely emptied drawing-rooms, under the radiance of all the electric lights, Ted and Carrie whirled round, trying the floor, while at the piano Bob, up from Stoneyhurst for the wedding, strummed a waltz with heavy fingers and the aid of the loud pedal. Lucy Mary, nursing a basket of programmes, leaned against the piano's tail, watching the musician with adoration, and criticising his performance with candour. The Babe, resplendent in real lace and black velvet, was busy making slides across the bow-window, an accomplishment just acquired on the ice in Lancashire. He muttered to himself choice morsels of his new Hodder vocabulary: "Now then, Toppin, you bloomin' kangaroo, out of my path!" and ignored his fellow men.

When Agatha came into the room Robert let his hands crash down upon the keys, and stopped short. "My! ain't I the cheese!" he said vulgarly, and "Sorry!" cried Ted, who, at that moment, steered his partner straight into her.

"Have a programme?" queried Zulu, and began to disentangle one of the highly glazed white and silver cards from the rest, a work of difficulty, as the slender cords and slim pencils were already inextricably mixed.

"I bet you Aggie doesn't get a dance all the evening!" declared Bob, with schoolboy brutality.

Agatha smiled. "I shall get *one*, anyway, for I'm going to put down your name for the very first waltz, Robert," and although he protested that the moment dancing began he

meant to "bunk" to the refreshment-room, nevertheless he felt flattered and pleased, for, in spite of Lucy Mary's constantly expressed readiness to dance with him, he had not foreseen any chance of a real partner that night.

Lady Blount swept into the room, a stately and even a gracious figure, and swept round it, making the most ungracious remarks. There was too much light—not enough flowers. Who had been stupid enough to put all that French chalk upon the floor? "Just look at my gown, Carrie! It will be absolutely ruined before the evening's over! So that's your dress, Agatha? I must say it's most unsuitable! It's the coming-out frock of a girl of seventeen. Elise ought to have had more sense."

The sound of the hall-door bell pealed through the house.

"Here! People are beginning to arrive, and your father not yet down. He's the most dilatory man I know. And where are Jack and Gerard, and the other girls?"

There were other bells. Four or five guests reached the drawing-room together. Jerningham entered one of the first. He looked very fresh, very handsome in his evening-clothes. His manner was cordial, charming. Even Lady Blount, smiling back into his good blue eyes, found nothing to censure.

"Awfully sorry I couldn't get to the wedding this morning! Hope it went off all right? Yes, we only reached home to-day ourselves. Had a splendid time, done everything, been everywhere. I don't believe there's a church or a palace in Italy that we haven't studied and sketched. And didn't those old Italian chaps know how to build, too? I'm crazy about Renaissance architecture, and the domes of Brunelleschi and Michael Angelo. Ah! there was Titian! But I mustn't bore you with my crude enthusiasms——"

He turned to Agatha, who stood near her mother. "Do you know, for a moment I hardly recognised you. Ladies' dress makes such a tremendous difference, doesn't it? But it's awfully jolly to meet you again. Will you give me this dance? It's the first 'extra'—just to set things going?"

The musicians were, by this time, installed in the back room, and a brilliant waltz had struck up. Guests were arriving in an unbroken stream, and light dresses and black coats formed little groups about the floor.

He took her hand and they began at once. Agatha had been practising lately in the evening with Ted and Bernard Goldney, and she got round the room creditably. Before he left her he took her programme and wrote down his name for numbers

five and eleven. A little giddy, but extremely happy, she danced the next waltz with Robert, and then sat down and looked on.

Margaret and Mary Frances were surrounded by a crowd of eager youths. Their cards were completely filled, while many of their girl friends lined the walls, still waiting for introductions. Moghey, with the younger men, was particularly popular because she was so "tremendously pretty," and because they thought her so intelligent. She always agreed with everything they said.

Gerard Blount declared that "Moghey was of your own opinion, even before you had uttered it." Carrie, with sparkling eyes and brilliant colour, and great animation, did the honours of the house in a spasmodic fashion. When asked for a dance by a man who didn't please her, she remembered she was bound to look after her guests. "I'm so sorry, but I'm afraid I shan't be able to dance this one; you see, there are so many girls sitting out. But you'll be nice, won't you, and let me introduce you to Miss Smith?" And the presentation was made. Strange to say, she never had occasion to introduce Miss Smith to any save the bad dancers and the nonentities.

The room was filled now with gyrating couples. It was amusing to watch them. When the music ceased, they streamed out upon the balcony, or downstairs to the conservatory or refreshment-room. Agatha saw that the Trevors were come. Aunt Carrie was over by the window talking to Lady Blount, and Uncle Fred, tall, thin and juvenile, was wandering about with his eye-glass in his eye, examining the decorations.

Number five in the programme was reached. It was again a waltz. The first notes brought the most energetic hurrying in. Moghey entered on the arm of young Nolan, M. F. tripped and chattered beside a strange and spotted youth, who, as they danced, sawed her arm up and down like a pump-handle. The whole room twirled. Agatha could no longer follow any separate couple. She watched the dancers in a mass. Her feet tapped to the music. In another moment or so she, too, would be moving amongst them.

Uncle Fred strolled up to her.

"Have a turn, Aggie?" he said condescendingly.

"Thank you, Uncle Fred, but I'd rather not. I dance so badly."

It was her dance with Jerningham, but he had not come, and she was reluctant to say she still waited for him.

"Oh, nonsense! I saw you dancing when I came. You seemed to get along all right. Let's see your programme."

He took it from her. "Robert"; "C. J." he read. That's Jerningham, eh? And here's another "C. J." lower down. But I don't fancy he'll come near you again. I've just been talking to him. Asked him how you danced, and told him you were an escaped nun. You should have seen his face!"

Agatha coloured deeply with humiliation and pain.

"Oh, Uncle Fred! How *could* you be so unkind!"

She stopped, choked with emotion and impending tears.

"Well, it's true, isn't it? You can't expect to keep it dark, and lots of fellows would like you the better for it, it shows your spirit. But Jerningham seems to be one of those strict sort of chaps. I could see he thought he'd been committing a sacrilege to have had his arm round your waist. Yes, look here. He's chucked you for Carrie! Come along!"

Agatha was obliged to obey, but, swung energetically round in her uncle's arms, discovered that she hated waltzing and never wished to dance again.

As she resolutely declined refreshments, Major Trevor went off alone in search of them.

"Well, Miss Blount, you've not forgotten me, I hope?" said a voice at her elbow, and raising her head she saw Alfred Withers, a Folkestone friend of Jack's, whom she had met when there in the summer. They shook hands.

"You're not dancing?" said he. "Then I'll sit down beside you if I may, and we'll gossip a bit. A very different scene, this, to Folkestone beach, isn't it? Not nearly so healthy a one. When I marry I shan't let my wife dance or keep late hours. They play the dickens with a woman's health. Besides, a wife's place is in her home. You agree with me, I'm sure?"

"Yes, I certainly do," Agatha answered shyly, and her thoughts flew to Katie, as they had done so often during the evening, to wonder what she was doing, how she was feeling at that very moment. Katie must surely feel horribly strange and embarrassed at finding herself quite alone with a man in a foreign town, even though that man were one whom she knew as well as Bernard. Yet Katie liked to be with Bernard; undoubtedly she would sooner be alone with him at the Paris hotel than here amongst all her family at the dance.

Agatha spoke her conclusions out loud. "But I suppose that when a girl marries she gives up society of her own accord?"

"Not a bit of it. Wants to go out all the more. But a man must be a fool who permits it. A sensible man knows how to control his wife and household. Don't you agree with me?" he asked again, and Agatha murmured that she did agree.

Withers kept stroking his beard, while he watched his companion from behind his glasses with intelligent, purposeful eyes.

"My wife," he affirmed, "will find her pleasure at home looking after her husband and children. Suppose we go downstairs into the conservatory? We shall be more to ourselves."

He led her there without waiting for any reply, and she liked these masterful ways, which relieved her of the difficulty of deciding for herself. His personality did not attract her as Jerningham's did, although it was true that his pointed auburn beard brought him nearer to the blonde Christ of her dreams. Besides, Jerningham had deserted her, and evidently condemned her, while Withers either did not know her story or, knowing, was indifferent to it. But Jack had told them that Withers was a Protestant; no doubt for this reason he would not care. And reflecting on this point, she felt a sort of terror as she measured the distance she had fallen since coming back into the world. It seemed monstrous that she, Sister Marie des Anges, should be sitting amicably beside a Protestant, should be listening to his conversation with interest. Were he to die to-night, she knew that he must go straight to Hell for ever. She looked at him with awe-filled and compassionate eyes.

Withers laughed, said, "May I ask your thoughts?" and was amused and flattered by the confusion into which Agatha fell. He told himself she was a malleable little creature, and he didn't forget that she possessed six thousand pounds. The fact that she had been a nun didn't perturb him at all, and that she remained a Roman Catholic was a point in her favour. He approved of religion for women in the same way as he approved of blinkers for horses—it kept them straight. And the stricter the religion, the more numerous its rites, so much the less latitude and opportunity to swerve. He even saw no objection to the confessional-box in England, where temperaments—like the climate—are cold. His self-confidence assured him that all priestly influence over any woman of his would drop from her as she left the church. In his house there would be only one master, Alfred Withers: but Agatha Blount appeared to him well fitted to make a dutiful mistress of it.

He moved his chair nearer, and, prompt in his decisions and their execution, took her hand.

Agatha was filled with an indescribable terror, her whole body began to tremble, she longed to be a thousand miles away. Oh! he was going to kiss her! And then she realised, with a still greater terror, that she wanted to be kissed. The next

moment Jack Blount and Gwendoline Nolan came round the clump of palms which masked the inmates of the conservatory from the stairs.

Jack exclaimed: "Hullo, old man! So that's where you were all the time! Wondered where you had got to. You and Aggie have found a quiet corner, but you won't mind us, will you? Now then, Gwen, put yourself here, my child, and I'll fan you."

Withers gave Agatha a look in which she read annoyance, regret, and his well-defined intention of kissing her on some future occasion. Then he got up and offered her his arm.

"We'll leave you the field, Blount," said he. "Your sister and I were just going back to the drawing-room."

Throughout that winter Alfred Withers came often to Cromwell Road, where the Blounts were informally at home on Sundays, and he received invitations with Jerningham and others to theatre-parties and Town Hall dances. When May proved an exceptionally warm and brilliant month, and boating began, the Blounts gave their annual river picnic, sixteen young people and two boats from Maidenhead up to Sonning. Withers, who kept a boat of his own at Twickenham, offered a return hospitality by inviting Agatha, Moghey and Ted to spend a day with him there on the river.

But the opportunity of the conservatory did not renew itself, and he refrained from forcing the hand of Fate. At the same time Agatha was conscious that he paid her a subtle and particular attention which he did not pay to the other girls. She could not have defined precisely in what it lay, and yet the knowledge of it kept her perfectly happy. She was content, since he was, to let things drift, just as she was content to sit still in the stern of the boat beside Moghey, who steered, and watch him sculling stroke. She would let her hand hang over the edge of the boat, liking to feel the water rush through her open fingers, and she liked, too, to know that his intelligent, short-sighted eyes behind the inevitable glasses were constantly studying her face and person. That day spent on the suburban waters, between Twickenham and Chertsey, was one of the two happiest days of her life—the day of the dance, because of a few moments of expectation, had been the other.

Meanwhile, behind the social side of life there arose an agitating question, the question of her dowry. Would the Order of the Immaculate Conception return it, or refuse to return it? Lady Blount was absolutely convinced of the equity of its

return, and Sir Charles would have welcomed it—the family being large and their expenses heavy. Urged thereto by his wife, he had written to Reverend Mother on the subject, before Agatha had been at home many weeks. A voluminous and apparently interminable correspondence ensued.

Reverend Mother's contention was that until Agatha had applied for and obtained final release from her vows, no question of a return of dowry could be entertained ; but that, in any case, the Order could only relinquish its right to the thousand pounds given by Sir Charles on her profession. Of the six thousand inherited by her when already professed some years, she had made a free gift in due legal form to the Order, the money had gone to the building of the new chapel and wing and could not be returned. Over this transaction, and the multitudinous minor points attached thereto, there were months of correspondence, scores of letters between the solicitors of the Streatham nuns and Sir Charles and between Sir Charles and his old friend, Nolan, who had been Lady Welford's solicitor and Agatha's trustee. Sir Charles was especially annoyed that Nolan had not advised him of Agatha's so-called "free gift" to the convent, that all had been done behind his back and without asking his consent. To which Nolan replied that Blount's consent was not needed. Lady Welford's will gave instructions that should Agatha, on her marriage, *or at any other time*, require a portion or the whole of the six thousand pounds paid over to her, Nolan, *providing that he approved of the purpose for which she required it*, was to make this payment. And he produced a letter from Agatha, requesting him to sell out the whole of her Bank of Australia stock, and to draw up a deed conveying the proceeds to Reverend Mother. Sir Charles spoke of undue influence. It became a pretty quarrel.

The lawyers flourished and Agatha suffered, for her mother —highly incensed—never lost an opportunity to reproach her. She was reproached for her selfishness and want of natural affection in signing away her property to strangers, for her weakness of character in changing her vocation, and for the disrepute she had brought upon her family in coming home. If she ever needed any new clothes, or the smallest sum of money, Lady Blount complained.

"You should try to manage with what you have, Agatha ; that is the least you can do, remembering the heavy expenses your father is put to for the education of the boys, and that you are an extra person to keep, on whom we never reckoned." Or : "You ought not to write so many letters then ! You appear

to eat stamps! I'm sure your correspondence alone must cost your father £20 a year."

Constant recriminations of this sort became so humiliating that Agatha at last would sooner walk any distance than ask for a 'bus fare, and she took to using the free seats at Mass, in order to reserve her few pence for the offertory.

By July Reverend Mother's position was proved to be unassailable, the £6000 belonged indubitably to the Order, and the £1000 was only to be returned if Agatha ultimately decided to remain in the world and have her vows cancelled. On the other hand, Reverend Mother pointed out that if Agatha changed her mind, there would always be a home for her in the convent.

Sir Charles gave up the contest, weary of it, and of a great many other things as well. But Lady Blount showed the usual feminine inability to accept the inevitable, and merely included him, for his want of energy and determination, under the ban of her displeasure, which lay heavy upon Agatha. Nor could she cease from discussing the subject, and even the visitors who came to the house, including Jerningham and Withers, were invited to listen to her lamentations, and to give their views.

Withers' chief view was one which he kept to himself, and he was glad to remember that he had not kissed Agatha in the conservatory. He intended to marry, the marriage status being desirable for a medical man, an asset like a carriage; he liked Agatha, and £6000 would have decided him for her. But a thousand pounds was not worth considering. Fortunately, no harm was done. He had only to avoid the Blounts for a time. The summer holidays, just at hand, offered a natural break in the intimacy which, after the holidays, need not be resumed. He left town for Colchester, to spend an inexpensive vacation in his sister's house, and carried with him an agreeable sense of security in his unfailing good luck.

The Blounts again went to Folkestone, but this year's visit did not repeat last year's success. The party was smaller by Katie and Bernard Goldney, and less gay.

Sir Charles sat listless all day in the furnished house he had hired on the Lower Sandgate Road, and stared at the sea. He refused to escort his wife to the band, and seemed tired of everything. Lady Blount told each of her children, separately and many times over: "Your father is the most indolent and annoying man I know! Just look at him! He does nothing whatever from morning to night! Anybody else would be here, there and everywhere, up on the Leas with me, or over on the Hythe

Golf Course. I expect he will soon be too idle to feed himself, and will expect some of us to do it for him."

Agatha remembered this taunt with a pain in her heart when, back in town a few weeks later, she leaned over her father's bedside, trying to tempt his appetite with jelly or grapes. But he was tired of life, the result of his illness, or perhaps the cause of it, and after years of an apparently enviable success, he let himself succumb to his long latent, but suddenly developed disease with scarcely a struggle.

In the first stress of grief over her father's death, Agatha forgot to think about Alfred Withers, whose card of "sincere sympathy" had reached the family with hundreds of others. And there was also much else to think about, continual discussions as to ways and means, plans for the future. John Blount and Bernard Goldney were the executors of the will, by which a sum of £500 had been provided for immediate expenses. Everything else had been left to Lady Blount, and on going into accounts it was estimated she might have between £400 and £500 a year, which seemed a pittance after the lavish expenditure she had been accustomed to. The house in Cromwell Road must be given up, the carriages and horses parted with, expenses cut in every way. But certain expenses could not be cut, such as the schooling of the younger children. It became evident that the elders must fend for themselves, the daughters as well as the sons—unless, indeed, the girls were so fortunate as to marry.

The one bright part of the unsuccessful Folkestone summer was the fact that Margaret had got engaged to a certain Tom Bois. "He ought to have chosen M. F.," Robert remarked, "as then there would have been two tom-boys together."

Talking over their prospects with her eldest son, Jack Blount was of opinion that visitors should now be invited to the house again, of course in the quietest possible way. Jerningham was given to understand that Lady Blount would be pleased to see him on Sunday afternoons, as before. To Mr. Withers a definite invitation was sent, and his immediate reply read so cordially, the excuse given appeared so inevitable, his regret so sincere that Lady Blount, in the course of a week or two, wrote to invite him again. Again, "most unfortunately," he was prevented accepting. Jack Blount, meeting him by chance, asked him to look them up at home. He promised with effusion to do so, but did not come.

Agatha wondered and suffered in silence, and the others forgot him.

One day Carrie came flying into the drawing-room, full of news and the desire to impart it.

"What do you think I've just heard from Cyril Jerningham? Mr. Withers is going to marry Rhoda Hammond! Isn't it queer? Think of that hideous, red-haired, freckled little creature!"

Lady Blount felt deeply injured, the marriage of other people's daughters always appeared unpardonable to her. She said peevishly. "I credited Mr. Withers with better taste," and then found a reason for his seeming lack of it. "To be sure, Rhoda must have at least thirty thousand pounds. Her grandfather was 'Hammond's Blood Mixture.' You see the name everywhere still."

Ted was present, getting home from the bank early. He remarked, "I never could bear that chap! He's as close-fisted as they make 'em. The day we went up the river with him, he let me pay all the locks. Another cup of tea, Aggie, please, and rather hotter and stronger than the last."

Katie Goldney, who was calling, said, "I used to think Mr. Withers liked Agatha," but no one took this up, and Agatha herself kept her head bent low over the tea-tray, ministering to Ted's wants.

This, then, was the reason she had seen nothing of him for so many weeks. He had been making the acquaintance of Rhoda Hammond, had been falling in love, and was now going to marry her. It seemed extraordinary to Agatha. She thought of the dance last November, a year ago; of the kiss he had not given her in the conservatory; and she thought of Rhoda—a mere child—it was but the other day that she wore short frocks, and her thick red hair in a plait with a fuzzy end to it. It seemed incredible she was to be married. Agatha remembered Rhoda's passion for Sister Marie des Anges, and suddenly understood how these school-girl adorations were just a preparation for the real emotions of life, a "false dawn" before the morning broke.

After this, life seemed to Agatha more unsatisfactory than ever. Often now she found herself looking at the clock, and saying, "At Streatham the nuns are just going into chapel for Benediction," or "they are walking in the garden." "Sister Aloysius is telling tales of the Saints. Every one is happy and

amused." In the evening, when she sat at Aunt Carrie's, taking a hand at cards, or turning over the leaves of a book at home, she would reflect: "Now everybody in the convent is asleep."

She forgot the little miseries and boredoms of convent life, its dark hours and days. She remembered only the irresponsible, child-like existence there, in which she had her work, her place, her *raison d'être*. In the world she had no *raison d'être* at all. Worse than that, she was a burden upon her family. She would have liked to find paying employment, but there was nothing which she could do except teach young children, and certainly no Catholic parents would engage her as a governess. Sometimes she wondered whether she ought not to return to the convent, where, as Reverend Mother had written, her future was always assured. She hesitated over the irrevocable step, until there came a trivial word, heard by chance, which decided her.

She and Carrie were spending the evening at Aunt Caroline's, who occupied a flat on the second floor over a shop in the Brompton Road. The rooms were very small, and overflowing with Oriental trumpery picked up in the bazaars of Delhi and Meerut. There was music and cards, and two or three Catholic young men of the usual type. Under cover of a song, she overheard one youth saying to another, "No, that's not Carrie Blount in black, that's the old one. Carrie is in white."

With this surprising word "old" still ringing in her ears, Agatha looked at herself next morning long and critically in the glass. She saw that disappointment, late hours, and the change from the regularity of convent life had altered her immensely. She looked not only her age, but more than her age. She was hollow-cheeked, her hair had whitened upon the temples and above the ears.

She felt certain that her chances of marriage had gone by, and sitting down she wrote a submissive letter to Reverend Mother, humbly begging to be taken back. In less than a month after the letter's despatch she lived again within convent walls.

Some Innkeepers and Bestre

By Wyndham Lewis

To those inns scattered up and down through fiction and history all men have taken either their dreams, their indigestions, their passions, or the thread of their stories—the latter principally occupied with their hero or heroine, who happened to be sojourning there, and chiefly concerned with using them as a trysting-place of alarms, surprises, misadventures, brawls, and flight. In fact, they used the inn as a mere convenience, and in the strict sense as a "public-house"—a place where they would conduct their characters when the story was flagging, and there set the plot going again in a whirl of adventures of the high-road, that would be sufficient to carry them without further effort to the last page. Or else they would choose it as the scene of their comic interludes, and trysting-place of all the drunken characters in their book! And often they allowed these ruffians to behave most scandalously there, when they would have severely rebuked them if it had occurred anywhere else.

How many an obtuse traveller has been entertained by an angel unawares, or, less metaphorically, at least by an amazing and startling personage. But I have entered my inns with none of these preoccupations; with the result that I have discovered that even the most visionary of customers—the Knight of La Mancha himself—could not be more so than many a provincial French innkeeper that I have met with, though in what is often a very different way. Some of these men have made of innkeeping an astonishing art. It has its brilliant and eccentric exponents, who live not only unrecognised, but scorned. So subtle is their method and manner of charming the public that it has an opposite effect; the latter becomes furious, thinkin that it is being trifled with. It needs a public as imaginative as the landlord to appreciate what is often the most bold and revolutionary scheme of hospitality. Besides, although the *clientèle* be in view to begin with, this art, in its abnormal development, leaves all thought of its original aim

far behind, greatly transcends it. It would be difficult to decide which is the more heroic figure, the artist of genius starving in his garret or the landlord starving in his inn. I have seen the public turning away in rage and loathing from a certain landlord's door, but still he refused to modify one jot his manner and technique of hospitality; and after years spent in its lonely reception-rooms the house was sold to some mediocre person who brought custom flooding back; and he, the true artist, in the ruin of his fortunes, went down into the inhospitable grave. It is for such figures as this that we look in vain in many famous books that have exploited the romance of public-houses. With these innkeepers it is usually an obstinate belief in and cultivation of some personal, perhaps physical, attribute that dictates their conduct. A man is convinced that his oiliness of manner is more ineffably and exquisitely oily than any other man's, and from that moment, if his is not a popular oil, he is lost. Or another will spend his last halfpenny in exploiting and speculating on his breeziness, convinced that there is untold wealth in it; or nothing will shake a belief in a wife's pomposity, or her rotundity. I once knew a landlord who placed all his hopes in his wooden leg, in its at once laughable and friendly effect, and would not have had his old leg back again if he could.

There is a similar phenomenon very often to be met with among servants. Many a domestic is so proud and unbending in his servility, in the particular character and colour of obsequiousness that is his, that if it be unacceptable to those served, in general he passes much of his time out of work. He has become so overweeningly proud of the splendid rigour of his abjection, this starved sentiment of pride growing more monstrously and fiercely in the utter meanness of his life than it has ever done in the souls of the greatest despots and conquerors, that he regards his employer as the merest pretext for abasement. And the master, often blind to all this, such an intensity of feeling being incomprehensible to him, imagines that that stiff back has cast out all limpness in his honour, and that those calves bulge for him.

A young French *hôtelier* setting up business in the provinces forms himself rather in this way. To regulate his attitude towards his customers, he first imagines an ideal customer, and this is inevitably more or less himself. Also, in each hotel of the more modest sort it is the proprietor's idea of comfort that decides its disposition. But in the manner that he finally adopts there will be, apart from his accommodating his nature to what

he considers the needs and demands of the ideal customer, another element, caused by his personal conception or mirage of the ideal hotel proprietor. Sometimes the inchoate landlord within him is not that most fitted for the incipient customer likewise emanating from the depths of his consciousness. This is a situation of no little delicacy and embarrassment. But fortunately it is of rare occurrence.

The truest type of innkeeper is to be found in France. And as these papers deal with some of my experiences in Brittany last summer it is chiefly with France that I am concerned.

The Frenchman considers commercial life as the type of all life. And money is the one romantic element in this essentially scientific mind. He becomes mystical about nothing else. The most sceptic and penetrating of Frenchmen, brought face to face with this problem, with this hereditary weakness of their nature, give up in despair, and consent to make an exception in the case of money, to regard it poetically and sentimentally. When they approach this subject they lose their Latin precision and materialness, and one would think it were some northern dreamer speaking.

I can imagine a Frenchman discoursing somewhat in the following manner, when worked up into rather an exalted frame of mind by some of the Ring music, say. Although probably ignorant of the theme and story of the Nibelungen, still his spirit would feel instinctively that gold, that money in some form or other, had a lot to do with it, was the key of the matter. "It is common for a man to settle substantial sums on his wife, and if I could I would pay all my friends heavy salaries. If you are paying an *employé* a large income, you think better of him, just as you prefer goods that you have acquired at great expense. If my bosom friend were receiving a couple of thousand a year from me in recognition of the extraordinary position he occupied as regards me, I should probably think better of him and enjoy his affection more than if I paid him nothing for it, and generally be extremely proud of him. It is human nature to be delighted with that for which one has paid largely in money, kind, or labour or sorrow. *Parfaitement!* And here I come to a very important point. One always wishes to bestow things on those one loves, admires, be it one's vitality, one's gifts, or one's goods. If a Spaniard, for example, gets particularly enthusiastic about you while out for a walk, it is all you can do to prevent him from undressing there and then and giving you everything down to his socks. As it is, you arrive home your pockets bulging with presents—handkerchiefs,

cigarette-boxes, stilettos, newspapers, cravats, and probably, like a clown in a circus, his hat jammed down on top of your own. But this Spaniard's impulse to bestow things on him that he feels peculiar sympathy for is exactly the same as my, the Frenchman's, impulse to bestow money upon my friends. It would be equally natural in Spain, although it would be more abstract, and not touch the imagination so much, if a Spaniard, meeting you at dinner and being pleased with you, in the heat of the moment gave you a five-pound note. As it is, the Spaniard insists on my accepting all his rings. But whereas his fingers are long, fine, and active, mine are corpulent, sleek, and meditative. So his rings are of no use to me except to pawn. Likewise his hat would fit me ill. But if he were to give me a thousand dollars I could provide myself with a costume analogous to his, but made to my measure, a hat to match, and spacious rings for all my fingers. In the same way one's gifts, one's susceptibilities, more essentially personal, cannot be given away, or always be assimilated and used by another. So man has developed a kind of abstract factor in his mind and self, a social nature that is the equivalent of money, a kind of conventional, nondescript, and mongrel energy, that can at any moment be launched towards a friend and flood him up to the scuppers, as one might cram his pockets with gold. One cannot give him one's own gifts or thoughts, but one bestows upon him this impersonal, social vitality, with which he can acquire things fitted to his particular nature. Because the front that a gentleman of our day shows to the world is conventionalised and uniform, people do not usually recognise that a high state of civilisation and social development is also that of individualism *par excellence*. The characterless, subtle, protean social self of the modern man, his wit, his sympathies, are the moneys of the mind. When the barter of herds, tools, and clothing gave place to coinage this sort of fellow began to exist. And this artificial and characterless go-between, this common energy, keeps the man's individual nature all the more inviolable and unmodified. Why people have this inalterable passion for bestowing things on their friends is because the richer these friends be, spiritually or materially, according to the desire of the person, the more he feels his own love and power. A man would ripen his friend like the sun—not impose on him his own forms and characteristics, but merely his vitality, his heat; he would have his friend's individual personality strongly fructify. And such a result can only be achieved by this modern ideal of abstracting energy from a purely personal and coercive

form, and making it a fluid, unaccented medium—the civilised man, in short. This is the modern man's ideal of realising himself in others; that is, the *degree* of himself, and not the specific character, which is inalienable. Those of the ancients that were not moderns, their personality not having become a medium of this sort, could not realise it in others, since it could not be assimilated raw; their way was to subdue and tyrannise over others, and in the mere power of destruction and of subjecting find self-realisation. I personally am terrified if a man wishes to be my friend and shows a dark and obstinate tendency to disregard this conventional, civilised abstraction of social life, this money of such relationship—wishes, in short, to deal with me very self to very self. My savage and inner being has been used so long to solitude, and to having a puissant and protean shadow between it and the world, that it has become more savage than the bushman's naked spirit, and at this sudden and direct contact with another human being it retreats hastily still deeper into its seclusions. Civilisation has resulted in the modern man becoming, in his inaccessibility, more savage than his ancestors of the Stone Age. I feel also that I am being hurried by this stranger into the Dark Ages, that he will make me some costly spiritual present, in 'kind'—and not in 'money,' as I should much prefer—and then squabble with me over the worth of my return present and his dignity, and probably end by cutting my throat. Just as when a woman's thoughts are set upon me the only form of covetousness as regards myself or my person that I receive benevolently or in any way encourage is that having merely my friendship for its object—when it is the social man that she is setting her nets for. Love is an abyss; as a basis for such a contract as she proposes it is inadmissible. A marriage for friendship or for money is the only possible one, and there is room over and above the business part of the matter in either case for love."

At this point, perhaps, the music will swell up again, and the Frenchman, still more moved, will continue, with a fanatic expression in his eyes: "But money (to speak no longer of its equivalents, but of itself!) has a mystical and magnetic power over man. It draws out of him everything that is mean, interested, calculating. English people cry out at the mercenary character of the Frenchwoman, and of all our sexual relations. But as much, and more, 'true sentiment' exists between French lovers as between their unmercenary English cousins. Mean and worldly interests creep into all relationships that are not purified by money. It obviates many a baseness. It is sanitary,

bracing, necessary. It is like an inoculation undergone at the outset. It clears the air. All the mercenary and mean sentiments go into the gold piece—that represents them and absorbs them; it purges the spirit. We Frenchmen merely pay the evil and deceitful and scheming spirits to keep away. Pay that we and the woman may enjoy each other's society without hindrance, hypocrisy, mistrust, or preoccupation—may love each other, if our natures tend that way. In short, pay so that interest should be dragged to the light in the first place, and pensioned at once, so that it should not work secretly and impalpably, as it otherwise does, and spread and infect the whole with its poison. Money is great in evil. But it is nothing compared with the greater iniquity of human nature, that we use it against. It is like the slight indisposition of an inoculation compared with the disease itself. Money is the one thing that saves us from our mean and mercenary passions, whose boundless and obscure anarchy would come in its place."

Here the eloquent Frenchman might draw breath, and by this time you, infected with his ardour, would continue yourself: "Yes; what you say, although the merest truism, is often forgotten in our country. The Englishman has a business self and a private self. He calls the Frenchman's intimacy of shop manners hypocrisy. But the Englishman, in dividing himself up in this way, breeds a much deeper hypocrisy. It is a result of this arbitrary partition of his life that has made the nation a byword in Europe. In insisting that the relations of his private life have nothing but an unselfish, sincere, and heroic nature he leaves unmolested and uncurbed the element of selfishness that battens on the really heroic qualities left in its obscure company. So that in this arrangement, by virtue of which he considers himself a frank and above-board sort of man, he becomes the very type of the impostor. Or else, if he become anything but merely formal in his business manners, it is to affect his private self, who is wholly unselfish in his eyes. The result is that people who have only business intercourse with him—such as foreign nations with whom he is bargaining—consider him the most disgusting hypocrite that ever lived. His Latin neighbour has not two selves, but one self for public and for private life. He does not divide his nature crudely into a purely business person, and another and second person, purely high-minded, affectionate, &c. He mixes these two persons into each other, and is always the same man. Both in his bed and his *boutique* his attitude is made up half of calculation and half of sentiment, and always he is noisy and cajoling and magnanimous." The

Frenchman is becoming uneasy at the direction your discourse is taking, and here I suggest that you should subside into silence again, having had your say, and relieved yourself of some of the burden of thought induced in you by your eloquent neighbour.

French people, it is true, make much more use of their personality in commerce than the English; also of their idiosyncrasies—nay, their affections and tenderest feelings. A French shopkeeper gets quite sentimental about a customer that is in the habit of buying extensively in his shop. I was astonished once to see real feeling in a barber's face, whom I had accidentally deserted—a pale, pretty, inhuman sadness, such as his block in the window might have displayed, it is true, but still feeling. Another time I found myself involved in the most theatrical of friendships with a furniture remover and cabinet-maker. His charges became more and more exorbitant, and his feeling for me almost hysterical. I felt that he was impelled to raise his prices in the interests of our friendship, and as I was touched at this I did not protest. I had occasion to change my quarters several times. He regarded my restlessness as a very beautiful and touching trait in my character, and very closely allied to the profoundest of human sentiments. And also he was moved sometimes at the thought of me. Touched suddenly while engaged in carrying my things up one flight of stairs and down another, through Gothic portals one month, along airy galleries the next; past *concierges* whose "lodge" is always vacant, with a notice informing one that they are on the staircase, but whom one never sees—mysterious and *insaisissables concierges!*—past truculent *concierges* who placed a thousand obstacles in his way—who had insisted on seeing not only the receipt for the rent, but all the twenty-three different vouchers for his honesty that never leave a Frenchman's breast-pocket whether he be honest or not, and who, after prying lengthily into his life, allowed him in, still protesting; past drunken *concierges*, waking up and frenziedly attempting to do their duty, with an inarticulate and vehement cry and mad surging of the body and seething of the face, but relapsing into ignominious sleep; groping in shadowy vistas with my chest of drawers on his back, whose weight he knew to an ounce; pausing a moment on the edge of cloud-high balconies, from which the Panthéon could be seen, a flight of doves, the fresh world of the roofs—I would see his face grow pinched and staring of a sudden. Or in some dark corner of the ascent, his forehead bent nearly to the floor, dripping with sweat, during the measured and excessive labour his mind exceptionally active, this thought would assail him.

Or seeing the furniture settle down awkwardly, whimsically, forming sad lines and unhappy masses, in the new abode, every piece of it connected in the mind with some spacing or character of the last room, he would stand for a moment involuntarily discouraged and oppressed before its strangeness, and would regard this emotion as one inspired for me. Or the erratic life led by my furniture—its lack of harmony and cheerlessness in that particular moment, rather—suddenly revealed to him, by analogy, the way that he ought to regard its owner. And he saw dimly a spirit that, with its ideal surroundings, made no harmonious whole; something uprooted and forlorn. These feelings were a new bond between us, and of course the bill gave a generous leap at the same time, attaining an unprecedented figure.

Because of this close association of the pocket and the heart in the Frenchman's arduous life of gain, one of these strange tradesmen would not improbably die of heartbreak were his best customer to leave him. This platonic love of the French tradesman for his customer is very curious. I expect when the French laws become a little more consistent there will be added to the *crime passionnel* a *crime commercial*, with the same attenuating circumstances attached. One will then be compelled to distribute one's purchases over a large area, and avoid anything approaching a *liaison* with one's grocer or tailor. Such an affair as that I have mentioned above with the furniture remover might have fatal consequences.

The principle I indicated above, of applying forms of private life to public life in France, is naturally in particular characteristic of the innkeeper. For if a draper in his shop welcomes you as a friend, the innkeeper, with the clearer analogy of his business to " the home," welcomes you as the guest of his hearth, to the house where you are to eat, sleep, and live. The fact that you pay does not in any way modify the primitive feeling of hospitality, the sentiment of benevolence towards the guest that God has sent, the friend entertained at his board. Quite the contrary. Only these feelings of hospitality, of necessity rarely exercised in private life, are strenuously exercised every day in his business. These emotions, like the body, develop if constantly used. Develop, in this case, to prodigious proportions; until, to pursue the physical simile, the original frame and structure is no longer discernible beneath a bulging mass of the strangest excrescences. The innkeeper's soul is a monstrosity of hospitality.

So the study of the French innkeeper is especially fruitful,

for he veritably puts his whole soul into his part, everything in him blossoms out prodigiously within the conventional limits of his trade. And if any one should say that the affections and things of the heart bloom but artificially in this atmosphere of commerce, I would reply that it is equally undeniable that, as some of the most odd and beautiful varieties of flowers and fruit come to life in the hothouse, so the strangeness and enormity of this soul's hospitable development is often unequalled. These loves and generosities, "forced" as it were in a commercial air, are to some more interesting than the flowers of the field of the affections and other more "natural" products. The Parisienne is a very extraordinary person. But the French innkeeper is of the same stock.

BESTRE

Bestre keeps a boarding-house for Parisians and other strangers in one of the remotest fishing villages of the Breton coast. It is only open in the summer, and he passes the winter months in hunting. He is a stranger to the place himself, a "Boullonais," and at constant feud with the inhabitants. Bestre's great-grandfather came into France from the Peninsula, with the armies of Napoleon, and his Spanish origin is visible in his face. He is a large man, grown naïvely corpulent: one can see by his movements that the gradual and insidious growth of his stomach has not preoccupied him in the least. Like some king perfectly aware and yet indifferent to the fact that one of his nobles is deliberately and scandalously enriching himself under his nose —some Minister keeping in his own pocket the revenues entrusted to him for distribution throughout the realm—indifferent from superb carelessness for such matters, and also owing to the fact that this subtle courtier procures him many pleasures and benefits—somewhat in this way has Bestre regarded his increase of girth and the organ concerned. But in any case things have not gone very far. Sunburnt, with a large yellow-white moustache, his little eyes protrude with a cute strenuosity of expression. When he meets any one for the first time his mouth remains open, with his cigarette-end adhering to the lower lip; he assumes an expression of expectancy and repressed amusement, like a man accustomed to nonplussing and surprising people—the expression the company wears in those games of divination when they have made the choice of an object, and he whose task it is to find it out is called into the room and commences his cross-questioning; or the look with which, in the game of

blind man's buff, the pursued follow their groping and erratic pursuer. Bestre shows in his whole attitude a similar arrogant calm and attentive nonchalance; and his remarks, in addition to their mysterious profundity, are delivered with a provoking jocoseness, in the tone of those taunting cries with which his companions seek to exasperate the blindfolded man; as though he would cause the new-comer's mind to whirl round and dart frantically to left and right, without, however, managing to seize any of these mocking thoughts that beset him. Bestre gazes at a new acquaintance as though the latter, all unconscious, were entering a world full of astonishing things, of which he had not yet become aware. A would-be boarder arrives and asks him if he has a room with two beds. Without uttering a single word, he will lead the way to a neighbouring door and let the visitor pass into the room, with the expression of a conjurer who draws the curtain aside and reveals to the dumfounded audience a peacock or a horse and cart where a moment ago there was nothing.

If a madman who believed himself a hen had asked Bestre solemnly for a large, airy room, with a comfortable perch to roost on, and a little straw in the corner where he might sit—Bestre a few days before having been visited by this very idea of arranging such a room, and all were ready—then this habitual manner of his would have been *à propos*—thoroughly appropriate.

Indeed, Bestre, in common with many innkeepers when a customer is explaining what he especially prizes in the way of cooking or comfort, behaves as though the latter were confiding some shameful secret, or explaining the requirements of a ghastly vice or madness. He will lower his voice, whisper in the visitor's ear, and before doing so glance over his shoulder half apprehensively. If some day all men are afflicted with mental derangement, as will certainly be the case unless inspectors are appointed to safeguard the sense for reality and combat Bestre and his kind, a man arriving at an inn and making no secret of the fact that he is a polar bear will be met by the Bestre-like landlord with a wink, his host making his eyes gleam with amusement and enthusiasm, and casting them admiringly over his form, saying, "I guess I shouldn't like a hug from *you!*"—and on chilly days pretending to feel the cold very much indeed, to give the bear all the more advantage over him.

It is the air of *understanding*, of being the only hotel-keeper or other man that *does* understand your particular idiosyncrasies, and consequently the air of being privy to something, of mystery and conspiracy, that is accountable for the

strange effect of Bestre's bearing on the most commonplace occasions.

Bestre conducts long and bitter campaigns with some neighbour, that will consist almost entirely of dumb show, a few words only being exchanged—antagonisms that will become more and more acute through several weeks, burst forth and wear themselves out with their own violence—all without words, or even actions that could be remarked as distinctively hostile by an uninitiated observer. It is a most weird sensation to find oneself in the midst of one of these conflicts : like a war in which two armies should take up successive strategical positions, move round each other, push each other back, have drawn battles and overwhelming victories, without ever closing or exchanging a shot. At the passing of an enemy Bestre will pull up his blind with the defiant enthusiasm with which men raise aloft the standard of their country : one is meant to see, or rather hear, in his springy walk a chant of victory, in his immobility intimidation.

Probably Bestre's great principle, however, is that of provocation : to irritate his enemy to such a degree that the latter can hardly keep his hands off him—till the desire to give the blow is as painful as a blow received. To outrage, in his intangible fashion, some unfortunate man, who refrains from striking for fear of the criminal penalties of such an act, and who takes the blow back into his own bosom, as it were, and is stifled by his own oath—*these* Bestre looks upon as so many blows, and so much abuse, of *his*, Bestre's, although he has never taken his hands out of his pockets, or so much as opened his mouth. Bestre is terrible, in his way. To what extent all his manœuvres are effective it would be difficult to say, but in their grand lines they succeed. The gamut of his hostilities this summer was not confined to innkeepers, local functionaries, &c. Several visitors disapproved of him also, chiefly out of boredom ; for time hangs heavy on the hands of the *mondain* at Kermanec. When the first great *ennui* came upon them they would walk about desperately, and their eyes would in due course fall on Bestre. At first puzzled by his eye and manner, after a moment of perplexed observation, as a dog dismayed by a doubtful odour belonging to something that he has been suspiciously approaching backs and barks angrily, they suddenly bristled, the remainder of their time flying in a round of petty plots, indignant conversations, alarms and panics. For this extraordinary man with a mere nothing, seemingly, could cause a veritable panic.

Notably a well-known painter and his family were angrily

responsive to this something in Bestre that seemed to make the human animal uneasy, as though in his composition were elements derived from the fauna of another planet.

Bestre is partly conscious of his strange attributes, and he shows the same self-consciousness as a man who is queerly dressed; also the subtle notoriety of his person is dear to him.

Undoubtedly one of his greatest victories was won over the distinguished painter's wife. She had the habit of passing the kitchen window every morning when Mademoiselle Marie was alone there—gazing glassily in, but never looking at Mademoiselle Marie. This had such a depressing effect on Bestre's old sister that she began to look quite seedy in a day or two. On the fourth morning, as his sister's aggressor cast her eyes into the kitchen as usual, there stood Bestre himself, alone, quite motionless, looking at *her;* looking with such a nauseating intensity of what seemed meaning, but in truth was nothing more than, by a tremendous effort of concentration, the transference to features and glance of all the unclean contents of his mind, that had he suddenly laid bare his entrails she could not have felt more revolted. He would, in the security of his kitchen, even have ventured on speech, had he not known how much more effective was his silence. She paled, rendered quite speechless —in Bestre's sense, that is expressionless, her glassy look shivered to atoms—hurried on and home, and was laid up for several days.

At other times he would come in and tell his boarders of the way in which he had routed the distinguished painter. "I wasn't such a fool as to insult him—there were witnesses; let him do that. But if I come upon him in one of those lanes at the back there! I was standing at my door; he came along and looked at my house and scanned my windows" (this is equivalent in Bestre warfare to a bombardment). "As he passed I did not move: I looked him in the white of the eyes: he thought I'd lower mine; he doesn't know me. And, after all, what is he, though he's got the Riband of the Legion of Honour? I don't carry *my* decorations on my coat! I have mine marked on my body. Yes, I fought in 1870; did I ever show you what I've got here? No; I'm going to show you." And while he is speaking he jumps up, quickly undoes his shirt, bares his chest and stomach, and points to something beneath his arm; then rapidly rolls up his sleeve and points to a cicatrice rather like a vaccination mark, but larger. While he is showing his scars he slaps his body, with a sort of sneering rattle or chuckle between

his words, and with his eyes protruding more than usual. His customary immobile expression is disintegrated, which is a compound of a constant foreboded reflection of the expression of astonishment that will appear in your face when you learn of his wisdom, valour, or wit, mixed with the slightest shade of sneering triumph, and a touch of calm relish at your wonder. Or he seems teaching you in his look the amazement you should feel, and his own expression gathers force and blooms as the full sense of what you are witnessing, hearing, bursts upon you, while your gaping face conforms more and more to Bestre's prefiguring expression.

Has Bestre discovered the only type of action compatible with artistic creation, assuring security and calm to him that holds the key of the situation, in a certain degree compelling others to accept your rules? But Bestre is perhaps alone in the possession of such a physique as is his.

I must here remark that Bestre is perfectly unconscious of this weird dumb-passive method of his, and, quite on the contrary, considers himself on the verge of a death struggle at any moment when in the presence of one of his enemies.

Like all people who spend their lives talking about their deeds, he presents a very particular aspect in the moment of action. When discovered in the midst of one of those silent battles of which he enjoys so much being the historian, he has the air of a company promoter of genius, cornered, and trying to corrupt some sombre fact into shielding for the moment his gigantic and not easily hidden fiction, until some yet greater brother can relieve it. Or sometimes he will show a wonderful empirical expertness in reality, without being altogether at home in it: such skill as some great virtuoso in his own trade might show, forced by circumstances to take up the tools of a kindred industry.

Bestre in the moment of action feels as though he were already talking, and his action has the exaggerated character of his speech, but strangely curbed by the exigencies of reality. He always has in his moments of most violent action something of his dumb-passivity—he never seems quite entering into reality, but observing it; he is looking at the reality with a professional eye, so to speak, with a professional liar's.

Often I have noticed that the more cramped and meagre his action has been, the more exuberant and exaggerated his account of the affair is afterwards, as a man escaping from a period of bondage and physical or mental restriction bursts into riot and dissipation; the more the restricting forces and forms

of reality have tried him, the more joy he takes in his liberty as historian of his deeds immediately afterwards.

Then he has the common impulse of avenging that self that was starved and humiliated by the reality, in glorifying and satiating the self that exists by his imagination.

A survival of certain characteristics of race, that I recognised as Spanish, is particularly curious in Bestre.

Bestre is an enormously degenerate Spaniard, all the virilities of the Spanish character being softened in this vapid Gallican atmosphere, and all the weaknesses, especially those akin to French weaknesses, intensified. However, one Spanish virtue has survived, a negative one: Bestre is in no way grasping, a thing not to be accounted for in any other way.

As to his dumb-passive method I traced this also to the Spanish strain in him, the more so that I have met certain South Americans (a South American is an enormously degenerate Spaniard) who had many analogous eccentricities.

A Spanish *caballero* has an extravagant belief in the compelling quality of his eye, of his glance: he would choose to shrivel up a subordinate, daunt a rival, coerce a wavering adherent, rather by this dumb show than by words.

Then, again, the only means that the rigidly secluded daughters of Spain have had for centuries of conveying their messages of passion and desire to their lovers has been in their glances.

Bestre, stationed in his kitchen, and waiting to intercept the baleful stare of the distinguished painter's wife, was helped to his success by the fact that in his vein ran the blood of so many women who, behind their casements at the half-drawn curtain, gazing at their lover in the street below, have put into their glance all the intolerable expression of a love that has never been eased in words.

The *mirada* of the Spanish beauty, her *œillade*, has become traditional. But all Spaniards are peculiarly sensitive to that speech of glance, gesture, and action independent of speech. Spaniards are always trying to master each other by the magnetism of their glance. This heritage, we will admit, must have been for something in the peculiar method of warfare so satisfying to Bestre.

As to the *raison d'être* of these campaigns at all, of his pugnacity, I think this is merely his degeneracy—the irritable caricature of a warlike original.

A Man of Impulse

By St. John Hankin

Richard Maxwell was strolling homeward one hot night in September to his rooms in St. James's. He had been dining at the Savoy and as the night was mild and fine he had decided to walk by way of the Embankment rather than jostle in a cab through the crowded Strand. His overcoat hung over his arm for coolness and he crossed to the pavement on the riverside to catch whatever breeze was stirring. As he made his way in leisurely fashion towards Westminster and was now within a couple of hundred yards of New Scotland Yard, his attention was attracted by a shabby-looking man, a little in front of him, who seemed to be attempting to scramble on to the stone parapet of the river.

"If that fool doesn't take care he'll tumble over," he thought to himself.

But the fool apparently had no intention of taking care. On the contrary, he deliberately raised himself upon the broad stone ledge until he was standing bolt upright.

Maxwell was an impulsive man who seldom stopped to think before interfering if he thought some one else was being guilty of an act of folly. The man could hardly be sober to behave in that eccentric manner. If he fell into the river he might have some difficulty in getting out again. Maxwell called out to him to be careful and at the same time quickened his pace.

His warning, however, had precisely the opposite effect to that which he had intended. The man on the parapet seeing him approach turned at once to the river, threw up his hands and jumped in. It was a clear case of attempted suicide and that under the very shadow of New Scotland Yard!

A less impulsive man might have crossed over to that building, rung the bell and called the attention of its occupants to the fact that an unknown man was at that moment in the act of committing a felony by drowning himself in front of their windows. Maxwell, however, was of more heroic stuff.

Throwing down his hat and overcoat he vaulted on to the parapet and dived in after him.

Fortunately the moon shone brightly and Maxwell was a good swimmer.

The tide was running out rapidly, but this only carried the would-be suicide in his direction and in a moment Maxwell had him firmly in his grip. The man struggled savagely with his rescuer, but Maxwell had practised saving life in swimming-baths and was quite equal to tackling him.

The only question was how to get him out of the water. The walls of the Embankment rose high and slippery on his left. He could not have scaled them unencumbered, much less with another man in his arms.

He decided, therefore, to drift with the current till they both reached Charing Cross steps. There he scrambled, not without difficulty, on to the steam-boat pier, hauled the other after him and proceeded to wring out his clothes.

It is possible that Maxwell had expected some gratitude from the man whom he had saved from drowning. If so, he was doomed to disappointment. The other sat in a heap on the wooden floor of the pier without attempting to dry himself and cursed him bitterly.

"D—— you!" he growled. "Why did you interfere? I might have been out of it all by this time if it wasn't for you."

If there was one accusation which made Maxwell angry it was a charge of "interfering." Like most impulsive people he was apt to step in rather heedlessly sometimes into other people's affairs. He had stopped more than one street fight with the result of being reviled impartially by both combatants and ultimately moved on by the police. The man's words, therefore, annoyed him excessively.

"Confound you!" he said. "I've saved your life and ruined a suit of clothes—what more do you want? Get up and don't stay grumbling there."

"What more do I want!" said the other, jumping to his feet—rage lent him an agility which even his burden of wet clothes could not subdue—"What more do I want! Hear him, this toff with his airs and his fine clothes, who thrusts his blarsted self in the way when a poor man wants to drown himself and expects him to say 'Thank you.' You're a dashed interfering swaggering puppy, that's what *you* are, and just you remember it."

Maxwell's impulse was to knock the man down. But for the moment he was inclined to distrust his impulses. Besides,

there is a certain absurdity in punching a man's head just after you have saved his life. Instead he attempted irony.

"I'm sorry if my *interference*"—he gave the word a fine stress—"annoys you. I won't repeat it. If you want to drown yourself, do so now. I won't stop you. The river's there still."

The man looked at the water for a moment as if he would take him at his word. Then he turned away.

"Curse you," he said, "I can't, and you know I can't. I tried once. I braced myself to it. And you came along and stopped me. My nerve's gone now. I can't."

"You're afraid," said Maxwell contemptuously, stooping to wring out a trouser leg.

"Yes," said the other, "I'm afraid. Who's to blame me? It isn't everybody as dares to drown himself once. Twice in one night is too much for any man."

"Then perhaps we'd better go," said Maxwell. "If you'll come with me I'll give you something to keep out the cold."

"It's the least you can do," said the other sulkily.

Maxwell shrugged his shoulders. The man's ingratitude disgusted him.

They made their way up the steps to the Embankment, and Maxwell hailed a hansom. The driver crossed over and contemplated them with rather sarcastic astonishment as he drew up at the kerb. His stare irritated Maxwell, who probably did not fully realise what an absurd spectacle he presented, standing on the pavement of the Embankment dripping with moisture with no hat on his head.

"What the devil are you looking at?" he said savagely.

"No offence, sir," said the man. "Been in the water?"

"Yes," said Maxwell, shortly. "Drive to 58 St. James's Street," and he motioned the other to enter the cab.

"Not so fast," said the driver. "I can't take you like that. What about my keb?"

"Hang your cab!" answered Maxwell. "Keep your horse still."

"That's all very fine, Governor, but what are you going to pay me for this job?"

"I'll give you half a sovereign," said Maxwell.

"And spoil my cushions! Not if I know it," answered the cabby, gathering up his reins as if to drive away. "Make it a sovereign, Gov'nor, or I'm off."

"All right," said Maxwell, who observed a constable approaching and wished above all things to avoid being noticed.

He did not desire to figure in the police reports as having jumped into the river at midnight to save a man from drowning. It would only confirm his friends' impression that "Maxwell was always interfering."

They got into the cab and he told the driver to go by Westminster. "I may as well pick up my hat and overcoat," he thought, reflecting that the evening under any circumstances was likely to prove a sufficiently costly one without the loss of those garments.

As they approached New Scotland Yard he stopped the cab and looked out at the pavement, but neither coat nor hat were to be seen.

"Just like my luck," he reflected. "I can't even put down an overcoat for ten minutes without some dishonest fellow making off with it."

He told the man to drive on. He was beginning to feel cold and numb. He had attempted with fair success to wring the moisture out of his clothes before getting into the cab, but his companion had made no such effort and water seemed to ooze from him at every pore.

"You're confoundedly wet," he grumbled, but the other remained obstinately silent.

However, St. James's Street was soon reached. Maxwell jumped out, gave the cabman his sovereign and fumbled for his latch-key. His companion stood by him on the pavement, apparently quite indifferent to his situation. Exhaustion seemed to have replaced ill-temper and he no longer looked even sullen. When the door opened he followed Maxwell upstairs without curiosity until he found himself in his host's chambers.

There was no fire in the grate, but there were spirits and glasses on the table and the dull eyes of the stranger lighted up for a moment as he saw them. Maxwell mixed him a strong glass of whisky and water. "Drink that," he said, and turned to mix another for himself.

The man took it. "Here's luck!" he said bitterly, and drank the toast almost at a gulp. Then he sat down heavily in Maxwell's best arm-chair.

"What the devil are you doing?" said Maxwell. "Get out of that chair. You're wet through."

"Don't mind *me*, Governor," replied the other with great magnanimity. "Wet won't hurt *me*."

"No, but it'll hurt my chair," answered Maxwell angrily. "Get up. Have some more whisky?" he added as the man showed no sign of moving.

The other rose slowly. "I don't mind if I do," he said thoughtfully, and did so.

"Where are you going to sleep to-night?" asked his host.

The other turned a dull eye on him. "I don't know," he said. "Here, I suppose."

"Oh no, you're not," answered Maxwell firmly. The thought of this damp vagrant, who had already ruined an arm-chair, transferring his ravages to the sofa made him firm.

"On the door-step, then," returned the other. But this did not suit Maxwell any better. The presence of a half-drowned man on a door-step in St. James's Street at one o'clock in the morning would require explanation. The police would make inquiries and the result would be those very paragraphs in the papers which Maxwell wished to avoid. Besides, he was a kind-hearted man and did not wish the man to die of cold in the street.

"You'd better be off and change your clothes at once," he said.

"I have no clothes," said the man, "except these." Maxwell sighed.

"I suppose I must find you some," he said resignedly. "You can't go about like that. You'd attract attention."

The man smiled grimly. "It ain't my fault——" he began. But Maxwell, who knew what he was going to say, cut him short by going into his bedroom and opening his wardrobe.

The problem of deciding which of his many suits of clothes he was to sacrifice cost him a keener pang than almost anything else on this unfortunate evening. There they lay on their trays, carefully selected by himself and no less carefully folded by his man. Finally despairing of finding any with which he could part without sorrow, he seized a suit at random and carried it into the sitting-room, together with a tennis shirt, a pair of socks, a pair of shoes and a rough bath-towel.

"Stick these on," he said ungraciously. "You'd better rub yourself well first if you don't want to catch your death." And he threw the towel to him.

The man grinned. "I don't mind about *death*," he said.

"Don't talk nonsense," said Maxwell irritably, "and be quick with those clothes."

Returning to his bedroom he threw off his own wet things, reappearing a few minutes later in a smoking-suit. When he returned he found his visitor transformed. A heap of sodden garments lay on the carpet, while their owner, disguised in a complete suit by a Bond Street tailor, looked if possible more grotesque than before.

Maxwell lit a cigarette and eyed regretfully the suit he would never see again.

"Isn't it time you were getting home?" he said at last as his visitor still showed no signs of moving.

"I have no home," said the man.

"But you must live somewhere," said Maxwell sharply. "Where did you sleep last night?"

"On the Embankment," replied the other.

Maxwell shuddered. He felt in his pockets, to which he had transferred such small change as the night's adventure had left him. The result of the search was a half-sovereign and a few shillings.

"Here," he said, "you can get a night's lodging with this and live for a day or two till you get work."

The man took the money without enthusiasm and counted it. "Can't do much with eighteen bob," was the only comment he made.

"You're an ungrateful scoundrel," said Maxwell, losing his temper.

"I ain't got much to be grateful for, goodness knows," replied the other. "I chuck myself into the river to drown and be out of every one's way. You come along and pull me out and now you want to put me off with eighteen shillings! If you have a fancy for saving folk's lives, I think you ought to pay for it."

There was something in the man's view which appealed to Maxwell as reasonable in spite of his irritation. He turned to his writing-table and took a cheque-book from a drawer.

"What's your name?" he asked shortly.

"John Bellows," answered the other, looking at him furtively and stretching out a hand towards the whisky decanter.

"No, you can't have any more whisky," said Maxwell, noticing the gesture. "You've had enough to keep you from cold. If you have more you won't be able to find your way and then you'll get into trouble with the police."

He filled in a cheque for £10, blotted it and handed it to Bellows.

"Here's something to start you in life again. Don't try and drown yourself or any tomfoolery of that kind in future. And if you get into difficulties don't come to me. Good-night."

The man took the cheque, examined it dispassionately and thrust it in his pocket. Then he went towards the door. "Good-night, governor," he said.

Maxwell went downstairs with him and showed him out.

He noticed with some bitterness that the man made no attempt to thank him. But then if a man does not thank you for saving his life he can hardly be expected to do so for £10. As he re-entered his room a sick feeling of disgust at the whole incident seized poor Maxwell. There lay the man's clothes in a heap on the carpet, which they were rapidly converting into a marsh. His best arm-chair was a sodden ruin. But the man himself was gone. That was one blessing. It was true that he left Maxwell the poorer by two suits of clothes, an overcoat, about eleven pounds in money and a certain amount of excellent whisky, but he had gone at last and his preserver resolved to take particular care never to see him again.

But if Maxwell imagined that he had heard the last of his rash act of philanthropy he was grievously mistaken. Two days afterwards the following advertisement appeared in the "Personal" column of the *Times*:

> FOUND, on the Thames Embankment at midnight, an overcoat, marked Richard Maxwell. Owner may have it on calling at 8 Great College Street, Westminster, and paying the cost of this advertisement.

The overcoat was spoiled to Maxwell by the recollection of the adventure it had shared with him and he never wished to see it again. So he decided to pay no attention to the advertisement. The finder might sell the coat and reimburse himself for his trouble out of the proceeds. After coming to this decision he dismissed the matter from his mind and went to luncheon at his club.

He had not sat down to his meal five minutes before a friend came up.

"Hullo! Maxwell," he said. "Is it *your* overcoat that was found on the Embankment? It's advertised in the *Times* this morning?"

"Yes," said Maxwell.

"How very interesting!" said the other cheerfully. "Tell me, do you usually leave your clothes about on the Embankment in the middle of the night?"

"No," answered Maxwell.

"My dear fellow," said the other laughing, "do be more communicative. Don't make a mystery of it. It's absurd to make mysteries. They're always found out."

"There is no mystery," said Maxwell peevishly. "There was a fellow trying to drown himself and I pulled him out, that's all."

His friend laughed with immense relish. "How like you Maxwell!" he said. "There never was such a chap for interfering."

Interfering! The one word which Maxwell could not bear. "Confound you!" he said savagely. "Don't stand giggling there."

Ten minutes later another man came up. "I say, Maxwell," he said, "what about that overcoat? Was it you who were trying to drown yourself or the other fellow?"

"What do you want to know for?" asked Maxwell sulkily.

"Simpson and I have a bet on about it. I said it was the other fellow. You're such a chap to interfere, you know."

"Of course," said Maxwell with bitter irony. "Well, if it's any satisfaction to you to know, it *was* the other fellow."

For two days Maxwell was continually haunted by the spectre of this overcoat. All sorts of wonderful theories were started as to what he was doing on the Embankment at midnight and he was perpetually being appealed to at the club, at the theatre, in the street, to say whether they were true or not. The air seemed thick with wagers on the subject among his particular set till Maxwell began to wonder whether he would not find his overcoat figuring in "The Betting" in the *Sportsman*. On the third day the advertisement appeared a second time in the *Times*.

If the story was to be allowed to die—and Maxwell wished it to do so with all possible expedition—it was impossible to allow the wretched coat to continue to be advertised at intervals in the newspapers. He therefore told his servant to go down to Westminster to claim it and pay whatever expenses had been incurred. As soon as the man brought it back he told him to throw it away.

But the reappearance of the advertisement revived the interest of his friends in the garment, and for the next few days their inquiries were once more incessant. Maxwell raged under the infliction, but this of course only made the temptation to chaff him greater.

At last, however, this joke, like other jokes, wore itself out and he had really begun to think the whole Bellows incident was closed, when one morning a couple of months later, just as he had finished his leisurely breakfast, his servant announced a person to see him on business.

"Did he say what his business was?" asked Maxwell.

"He said something about some clothes, sir," replied the man.

"Show him up," said Maxwell, whose tailor from time to time sent a man round with the latest patterns.

A minute later his man returned showing in John Bellows, who was dressed in seedy black and carried a parcel under his arm. Maxwell frowned.

"Well?" he said, when they were alone.

"I thought I'd call round with these clothes, sir," said Bellows gloomily. "They're hardly suited to a man in my position and I thought you might want them back."

"I don't," said Maxwell. "But you may put them down."

The man put them down on the table and stood looking at Maxwell.

"You haven't got such a thing as a drink about you, I suppose?" he said after a pause, looking round the room for the spirit-case.

Maxwell went to the sideboard and produced a decanter and a glass.

"If you drank less and worked more, you'd get on better in the world," he said.

"That's true, sir," said the other. "That's cruel true. Here's to you, sir, and thank you kindly."

Thanks came rarely from Bellows and perhaps Maxwell valued them unduly in consequence. His heart softened a little.

"How are you getting on?" he asked. "Have you got any work?"

"No, sir," replied Bellows.

"Why not?"

"It's not so easy to get work. Come to that," he added, "you don't seem so very busy yourself, sir."

"I don't want work," said Maxwell, who felt that the war was being carried into his own country.

"No more do I," said the man.

Maxwell was silent. The parallel between their two positions had not occurred to him.

Bellows finished his whisky and water meditatively.

"You ought to have let me drown," he said.

"I believe you're right," said Maxwell.

"But you didn't," added the other almost sternly. "You jumped into the river and pulled me out. I can't forget that."

"I wish you could," interjected Maxwell.

"But I can't," said Bellows. "I feel you're in a sort of way responsible for me. So when I'm hard up I naturally turn to you. I can't help myself."

"So you're hard up, are you?" said Maxwell grimly.

"Of course, sir," said the other humbly. "You gave me £10 I know, but that's two months ago and here I am, you see, stony-broke. You might lend me another tenner, sir, just to help me along?"

"And if I did lend you £10," said Maxwell, "what chance is there of your paying me back?"

"It *is* a chance, sir, I must say," returned the other, shaking his head.

"There I don't agree with you," said Maxwell. "I don't think there's a ghost of a chance about it."

The man stood hat in hand contemplating the carpet on which the stain left by his wet clothes was still visible. He showed no inclination to go.

"Well," said Maxwell at last, getting impatient, "what are you waiting for? Why don't you go?"

"I've nowhere to go to," replied the other.

"What the devil's that to do with me?" said Maxwell irritably.

"Oh, sir, don't be hard on me!" said Bellows, beginning to snivel. "I'm a poor man and I've no friends but you, and if you hadn't pulled me out of the water that night I shouldn't be here now," and he wiped his eyes ostentatiously with his coat-sleeve.

If there was one thing Maxwell hated it was emotion. The spectacle of a middle-aged man preparing to blubber in his sitting-room revolted him. In desperation he once more produced his cheque-book and rapidly filled in a cheque.

"Here's another £10," he said, "and remember it's the last. I told you before not to come again. I shall now give orders to my servant not to admit you in future. Be off with you and try to get some honest work."

The man took the cheque and his departure. Maxwell rang for his servant. "If that person calls again, Parker," he said, "send him away."

"Very well, sir," said Parker.

Two months rolled by and Maxwell heard no more of John Bellows. Then one day the man's existence was recalled to his mind by Parker.

"That person was here again to-day, sir," he said, as he was assisting his master to dress for dinner.

"What person?" asked Maxwell.

"The person who called some weeks back. You gave me orders not to admit him, sir."

"I remember," said Maxwell. "What did you do?"

"I said you were not at home, sir."

"What did he say then?"

"He said he would wait, sir. I told him you were not expected home for some time. I said you were out of town, sir."

"You did quite right, Parker."

"He was very obstinate, sir. I had some difficulty in getting him to go away. Perhaps I had better threaten him with the police if he comes again?"

This idea, however, did not commend itself to Maxwell. The police would take Bellows into custody, Bellows would tell his story to the magistrate, the magistrate would probably be facetious at his—Maxwell's—expense, and the whole story would get into the papers with Maxwell as the hero. The prospect was more than he could bear.

"No, Parker," he said, "you needn't do that. If you can't get rid of him in any other way, give him five shillings."

Parker looked at his master gravely. "Very well, sir," he said.

As Maxwell drove in his hansom to Grosvenor Square where he was dining, he reflected bitterly on the sufferings of philanthropists. This half-drowned man seemed determined to dog his footsteps for the rest of his natural life. After mulcting him of various sums of money, he was now taking away his character with Parker. That admirable servant had evidently come to the conclusion that his master had done something disgraceful, that Bellows knew it and was blackmailing him, and that Maxwell was afraid to hand him over to the police. The Scotch have a superstition that it is unlucky to save any one from drowning. So have the Chinese. Maxwell began to agree with them.

From this time Bellows made a practice of calling at St. James's Street at intervals and receiving five shillings from Parker. Maxwell writhed under this extortion but could not make up his mind to put an end to it. At length, however, there came a morning when he met Bellows in person. He was just approaching his door and was in the act of getting out his latch-key when Bellows touched him on the arm. Maxwell turned upon him savagely, the memory of his wrongs quite blinding him to the absurdity of the situation. "What are you slouching round here for?" he asked angrily. "Didn't I tell you you were not to come here again?"

Bellows began to snivel at once. "You're very hard, sir," he said. "You're my only friend and when I ask you for help you treat me like a criminal."

The ingratitude of this remark, coming from a man who

was living on his doles, exasperated Maxwell. Impulsively he seized Bellows by the collar and shook him.

At this moment, as ill-luck would have it, two young ladies approached, both of whom Maxwell knew, while the younger of them inspired him with a feeling which, if it was not exactly love, bade fair to become so. Evelyn Allieson was a charming girl of two and twenty. She and Maxwell were kindred souls, both impulsive, both a little inclined to step in where more cautious souls would have refrained from meddling, both prone to jump at conclusions. They had met at several country houses, and Maxwell valued her good opinion more than he would have cared to admit even to himself.

Miss Allieson's astonishment may easily be imagined on coming upon Maxwell at twelve o'clock in the morning in the middle of St. James's Street in the act of violently assaulting an elderly man in feeble health and seedy raiment. Her instinct of knight-errantry at once awoke at the spectacle, and leaving her companion she quickened her steps and laid a hand on Maxwell's arm.

"Mr. Maxwell!" she said. "For shame! How can you be so violent? You'll hurt him."

"Hurt him!" said Maxwell wrathfully. "I'll strangle him, confound him!" But he loosed his hold none the less. After all there was something slightly grotesque in a scene of this kind in the middle of the morning and in the middle of St. James's Street.

Bellows, released from his grip, whimpered outright. Evelyn's soft heart was touched at once.

"Oh, Mr. Maxwell," she said, "how cruel of you! Look! He's crying."

At this Bellows wept with increased fervour.

"What has he done?" she went on. "I believe you were going to strike him! Mr. Maxwell, how *could* you?"

Maxwell said nothing. He had the most satisfactory explanation in the world to offer, but ill-temper mastered him and he could not utter a word.

"Well?" said Evelyn, "why don't you tell me? I think you ought to tell me." But Maxwell was still silent. Bellows, however, who was delighted to find a sympathetic listener, began to pour out his griefs.

"I only asked Mr. Maxwell for help," he snivelled. "Six months ago he pulled me out of the river when I was trying to drown myself and just now, when I saw him, I asked him to help me. I thought he would do something for me. If it

weren't for him I should be dead and give no trouble to any one."

"Hush!" said Evelyn. "You mustn't talk like that. It's very wrong for anybody to kill himself."

"I had nothing to eat," answered Bellows with a gush of self-pity.

"Poor man!" said Evelyn. "And did Mr. Maxwell save you?"

"Yes. He saved me and now he won't help me."

Evelyn turned to Maxwell with virtuous indignation in her pretty grey eyes. "Mr. Maxwell, I'm ashamed of you," she said. "I thought you had a better nature. You must give him some money at once."

Too angry to explain or remonstrate Maxwell felt in his pockets, produced a sovereign purse and handed it to her in silence. To give the money to Bellows himself would have been too much humiliation.

Poor Maxwell! The manœuvre which saved his pride told heavily on his pocket. Impulsively Evelyn thrust purse and all into Bellow's hand. The purse, like its contents, was of gold, and in spite of his rage its disappearance was an additional pang to him.

"And now I think you ought to shake hands with him," Evelyn went on more gently, "just to show you're sorry for having been so unkind."

Bellows held out a dirty hand. "I'm agreeable," he said handsomely.

But this was more than Maxwell could put up with. "I'm hanged if I will," he answered sulkily.

"Not when I ask you?" said Evelyn.

Her grey eyes were very appealing at that moment. But Maxwell was too angry to notice them, too angry to realise the absurdity of taking the situation seriously.

"No," he said curtly.

"Good-bye, then," said Evelyn, and with a cold little bow she joined her cousin and the two walked on towards Piccadilly.

Maxwell looked after her retreating figure with a new pain at his heart. He had offended *her* now. Not content with draining him of money Bellows was bent on alienating his friends. He turned to pour out upon that worthy some of the bitterness which he felt, but Bellows had prudently seized the moment to retire and was nowhere to be seen.

One revenge, however, was open to Maxwell. Evelyn Allieson might never quite forgive him (and it is the painful duty of this chronicler to admit that she never did), Parker

might form some new discreditable theory of his master's action, Bellows might make a scene on his doorstep and get himself taken up by the police, paragraphs might fill the evening papers narrating Maxwell's impulsive leap into the river and his tardy repentance of that good action, but on one thing he was resolved; no more money should be forthcoming for Bellows from *his* pocket. He would instruct Parker at once to that effect.

He did so and, slightly cheered by this tardy act of vengeance, went to luncheon at his club. At last, he felt, he had got rid of Bellows. He had told Parker that he wished to hear no more of him: and Parker, who was accustomed to take his instructions literally, would not even mention the fact if Bellows again attempted to call at his rooms.

Fate, however, ordained that one more meeting should take place between Maxwell and his persecutor.

This happened one night in May about two months after the disastrous encounter in St. James's Street. Maxwell had spent the evening at the House of Commons, where for once an interesting debate had been in progress. The Strangers' Gallery had been crowded and the air suffocating, and when at last midnight struck and the debate stood adjourned he was glad to escape to the fresher atmosphere outside. The night was warm but a faint breeze from the river tempered it agreeably and, to enjoy this for a moment, Maxwell turned his steps towards Westminster Bridge. The moon had not yet risen and through the haze of the calm summer night the long line of lamps on the Embankment stretched away into the distance, while on the Surrey side illuminated advertisements of somebody's whisky flashed upon the night at intervals of half a minute to remind the gazer, if reminder were needed, that we are a vulgar nation.

Maxwell walked half-way across the bridge and then stood for a moment leaning against the parapet looking down upon the black water below.

He was startled by a voice behind him uttering his name. He turned sharply. "Who are you?" he said, but he knew only too well.

"Look at that now!" said the detested voice of John Bellows. "Here's a gent as'll pull a man out of the river when he's drowning 'isself and in half a year's time 'e forgets what he looks like! I call that noble! But"—here he grasped Maxwell by the sleeve with the energy of intoxication—"if 'e can forget 'is noble conduct, *I* can't. Strike me dead, I can't," he added, hiccupping slightly.

Maxwell shook him off angrily. "Look here, my man," he said, "I'm tired of you. I've helped you with money again and again, but you always come back. You're a worthless drunken vagabond and I'll have nothing more to do with you."

"Don't say that," said Bellows insinuatingly. "Don't say that, gentleman. I thought you had a feeling 'art for a poor man down on his luck. Give me a sovereign. I only asks a sovereign."

"No," said Maxwell firmly.

"Five bob then," said the man.

"No!" said Maxwell again.

Bellows grew indignant. "Look here, governor," he said, "you pulled me out of the water once and I hope I'm grateful" —Maxwell laughed—"but I can't live on air. If you won't let me drown give me something to eat. That's all I ask."

"No!" said Maxwell for the third time.

"Very well," said Bellows with a drunken attempt at dignity, "then I shall jump into the river, that's all. I give you fair warning."

"My good man," said Maxwell bitterly, "you are at liberty to jump into the river when and where you please as far as I'm concerned. *I* sha'n't prevent you. I've had quite enough life-saving to last me a life-time."

"You don't mean that," said Bellows, leering tipsily. "You're making fun of me. You couldn't see a poor fellow drown and not help him. You 'aven't the 'art."

"I wouldn't rely on that if I were you, my man," said Maxwell.

Bellows scrambled up on to the parapet. "Here goes then," he said theatrically, and poised himself unsteadily on its edge.

Whether he really meant to throw himself into the river or whether he was merely simulating that intention in order to soften the heart of Maxwell, it is impossible to say, and Maxwell himself has never thought it necessary to consider the point. There was a slip, a splash, and in a moment, before Maxwell could stretch out a hand even if he had wished to do so, the body had disappeared in the muddy waters thirty feet below.

As chance would have it the bridge at that moment was quite deserted. Not even the ubiquitous policeman was in sight, and if Bellows really wished to drown himself fate for once smiled upon him. Maxwell was a man of impulse. Impulse on that night in September made him leap into the river. Impulse on this night in May bade him walk away as quickly as possible. And he did.

Some Reminiscences

By Joseph Conrad

PART II

III

Can the transports of first love be calmed, checked, turned to a cold suspicion of the future by a grave quotation from a work on Political Economy? I ask—is it conceivable? Is it possible? Would it be right? With my feet on the very shores of the sea and about to embrace my blue-eyed dream, what could a good-natured warning as to spoiling one's life mean to my youthful passion? It was the most unexpected and the last too of the many warnings I had. It sounded to me very *bizarre*—and, uttered as it was in the very presence of my enchantress, like the voice of folly, the voice of ignorance. But I was not so callous or so stupid as not to recognise there also the voice of kindness. And then the vagueness of the warning—because what can be the meaning of the phrase: to spoil one's life?—arrested one's attention by its air of wise profundity. At any rate, as I have said before, the words of la belle Madame Delestang made me thoughtful for a whole evening. I tried to understand and tried in vain, not having any notion of life as an enterprise that could be mismanaged. But I left off being thoughtful shortly before midnight, at which hour, haunted by no ghosts of the past and by no visions of the future, I walked down the quay of the *Vieux Port* to join the pilot boat of my friends. I knew where she would be waiting for her crew, in the little bit of a canal behind the Fort at the entrance of the harbour. The deserted quays looked very white and dry in the moonlight and as if frost-bound in the sharp air of that December night. A prowler or two slunk by noiselessly; a custom-house guard, soldier-like, a sword by his side, paced close under the bowsprits of the long row of ships moored bows on opposite the long, slightly curved, continuous flat wall of the tall houses that seemed like one immense abandoned building with its innumerable windows shuttered closely. Only

here and there a small dingy *café* for sailors cast a yellow gleam on the bluish sheen of the flagstones. As one passed by, one heard a deep murmur of voices inside—nothing more. How quiet everything was at the end of the quays on the last night on which I went out for a service cruise as a guest of the Marseilles pilots. Not a footstep, except my own, not a sigh, not a whispering echo of the usual revelry going on in the narrow unspeakable lanes of the Old Town reached my ear—and suddenly, with a terrific jingling rattle of iron and glass, the omnibus of the Jolliette on its last journey swung round the corner of the dead wall which faces across the paved road the characteristic angular mass of the Fort St. Jean. Three horses trotted abreast with the clatter of enormous hoofs on the granite setts, and the yellow, uproarious machine jolted violently behind them, fantastic, lighted up, perfectly empty and with the driver apparently asleep on his swaying perch above that amazing racket. I flattened myself against the wall and gasped. It was a stunning experience. Then after staggering on a few paces in the shadow of the Fort, casting a darkness more intense than that of a clouded night upon the canal, I saw the tiny light of a lantern standing on the quay, and became aware of muffled figures making towards it from various directions. Pilots of the Third Company hastening to embark. Too sleepy to be talkative they step on board in silence. But a few low grunts and an enormous yawn are heard. Somebody even ejaculates: "*Ah! Coquin de sort!*" and sighs wearily at his hard fate.

The *patron* of the Third Company (there were five companies of pilots at that time, I believe) is the brother-in-law of my friend Solary (Baptistin), a broad-shouldered, deep-chested man of forty, with a keen, frank glance which always seeks your eyes. He greets me by a low, hearty "*Hé, l'ami. Comment va?*" With his clipped moustache and wide-browed open face, energetic and at the same time placid in expression, he is a fine specimen of the southerner of the calm type. For there is such a type in which the volatile southern passion is transmuted into solid force. He is fair, but no one could mistake him for a man of the north even by the dim gleam of the lantern standing on the quay. He is worth a dozen of your ordinary Normans or Bretons, but then, in the whole immense sweep of the Mediterranean shores, you could not find half a dozen men of his stamp.

Standing by the tiller, he pulls out his watch from under a thick jacket and bends his head over it in the light cast into the boat. Time's up. His pleasant voice commands in a quiet undertone "*Larguez.*" A suddenly projected arm snatches the lantern off the quay—and, warped along by a line at first, then with the

regular tug of four heavy sweeps in the bow, the big half-decked boat full of men glides out of the black breathless shadow of the Fort. The open water of the *avant-port* glitters under the moon as if sown over with millions of sequins, and the long white breakwater shines like a thick bar of solid silver. With a quick rattle of blocks and one single silky swish, the sail is filled by a little breeze keen enough to have come straight down from the frozen moon, and the boat, after the clatter of the hauled-in sweeps, seems to stand at rest, surrounded by a mysterious whispering so faint and unearthly that it may be the rustling of the brilliant, over-powering moonrays, breaking like a rain-shower upon a hard, smooth, shadowless sea.

I may well remember that last night spent with the pilots of the Third Company. I have known the spell of moonlight since, on various seas and coasts—coasts of forests, of rocks, of sand dunes—but no magic so perfect in its revelation of unsuspected character, as though one were allowed to look upon the mystic nature of material things. For hours I suppose no word was spoken in that boat. The pilots seated in two rows facing each other dozed with their arms folded and their chins resting upon their breasts. They displayed a great variety of caps: cloth, wool, leather, peaks, ear-flaps, tassels, with a picturesque round *béret* or two pulled down over the brows; and one grandfather, with a shaved, bony face and a great beak of a nose, had a cloak with a hood which made him look in our midst like a cowled monk being carried off goodness knows where by that silent company of seamen—quiet enough to be dead.

My fingers itched for the tiller and sure enough my friend, the *patron*, surrendered it to me in the same spirit in which the family coachman lets a boy hold the reins on an easy bit of road. There was a great solitude around us; the islets ahead, Monte Cristo and the Château d'If in full light, seemed to float towards us—so steady, so imperceptible was the progress of our boat. "Keep her in the furrow of the moon," the *patron* directed me in a quiet murmur, sitting down ponderously in the stern-sheets and reaching for his pipe.

The pilot station in weather like this was only a mile or two to the westward of the islets; and presently, as we approached the spot, the boat we were going to relieve swam into our view suddenly, on her way home, cutting black and sinister into the wake of the moon under a sable wing, while to them our sail must have been a vision of white and dazzling radiance. Without altering the course a hair's-breadth we slipped by each other within an oar's-length. A drawling sardonic hail came out of her.

Instantly, as if by magic, our dozing pilots got on their feet in a body. An incredible babel of bantering shouts burst out, a jocular, passionate, voluble chatter, which lasted till the boats were stern to stern, theirs all bright now and with a shining sail to our eyes, we turned all black to their vision, and drawing away from them under a sable wing. That extraordinary uproar died away almost as suddenly as it had begun; first one had enough of it and sat down, then another, then three or four together, and when all had left off with mutters and growling half-laughs the sound of hearty chuckling became audible, persistent, unnoticed. The cowled grandfather was very much entertained somewhere within his hood.

He had not joined in the shouting of jokes, neither had he moved at all. He had remained quietly in his place against the foot of the mast. I had been given to understand long before that he had the rating of a second-class able seaman (*matelot léger*) in the fleet which sailed from Toulon for the conquest of Algeria in the year of grace 1830. And, indeed, I had seen and examined one of the buttons of his old brown patched coat, the only brass button of the miscellaneous lot, flat and thin, with the words *Equipages de ligne* engraved on it. That sort of button, I believe, went out with the last of the French Bourbons. "I preserved it from the time of my Navy Service," he explained, nodding rapidly his frail, vulture-like head. It was not very likely that he had picked up that relic in the street. He looked certainly old enough to have fought at Trafalgar—or at any rate to have played his little part there as a powder-monkey. Shortly after we had been introduced he had informed me in a Franco-Provençal jargon, mumbling tremulously with his toothless jaws, that when he was a "shaver no higher than that" he had seen the Emperor Napoleon returning from Elba. It was at night, he narrated vaguely, without animation, at a spot between Fréjus and Antibes in the open country. A big fire had been lit at the side of the cross-roads. All the population from several villages had collected there, old and young—down to the very children in arms, because the women had refused to stay at home. Tall soldiers wearing high, hairy caps, stood in a circle facing the people silently, and their stern eyes and big moustaches were enough to make everybody keep at a distance. He, "being an impudent little shaver," wriggled out of the crowd, creeping on his hands and knees as near as he dared to the grenadiers' legs, and peeping through discovered standing perfectly still in the light of the fire "a little fat fellow in a three-cornered hat, buttoned up in a long straight coat, with a big pale face,

inclined on one shoulder, looking something like a priest. His hands were clasped behind his back. . . . It appears that this was the Emperor," the Ancient commented with a faint sigh. He was staring from the ground with all his might, when "my poor father," who had been searching for his boy frantically everywhere, pounced upon him suddenly and hauled him away by the ear.

The tale seems an authentic recollection. He related it to me many times, using the very same words. The grandfather honoured me by a special and somewhat embarrassing predilection. Extremes touch. He was the oldest member by a long way in that Company, and I was, if I may say so, its temporarily adopted baby. He had been a pilot longer than any man in the boat could remember; thirty—forty years. He did not seem certain himself, but it could be found out, he suggested, in the archives of the Pilot-office. He had been pensioned off years before, but he went out from force of habit; and, as my friend the *patron* of the Company once confided to me in a whisper, "the old chap did no harm. He was not in the way." They treated him with rough deference. One and another would address some insignificant remark to him now and again, but nobody really took any notice of what he had to say. He had survived his strength, his usefulness, his very wisdom. He wore long, green, worsted stockings, pulled up above the knee, over his trousers, a sort of woollen nightcap on his hairless cranium, and wooden clogs on his feet. Without his hooded cloak he looked like a peasant. Half a dozen hands would be extended to help him on board, but afterwards he was left pretty much to his own thoughts. Of course he never did any work, except, perhaps, to cast off some rope when hailed: "*Hé, l'Ancien!* let go the halyards there, at your hand"—or some such request of an easy kind.

No one took notice in any way of the chuckling within the shadow of the hood. He kept it up for a long time with intense enjoyment. Obviously he had preserved intact the innocence of mind which is easily amused. But when his hilarity had exhausted itself, he made a professional remark in a self-assertive but quavering voice:

"Can't expect much work on a night like this."

No one took it up. It was a mere truism. Nothing under canvas could be expected to make a port on such an idle night of dreamy splendour and spiritual stillness. We would have to glide idly to and fro, keeping our station within the appointed bearings, and, unless a fresh breeze sprang up with the dawn, we would land on a small islet that, within two miles of us, shone

like a lump of frozen moonlight, to "break a crust and take a pull at the wine bottle." I was familiar with the procedure. The stout boat emptied of her crowd would nestle her buoyant, capable side against the very rock—such is the perfectly smooth amenity of the classic sea when in a gentle mood. The crust broken, and the mouthful of wine swallowed—it was literally no more than that with this sober race—the pilots would pass the time stamping their feet on the slabs of sea-salted stone and blowing into their nipped fingers. One or two misanthropists would sit apart perched on boulders like man-like sea-fowl of solitary habits; the sociably disposed would gossip scandalously in little gesticulating knots; and there would be perpetually one or another of my hosts taking aim at the empty horizon with the long, brass tube of the telescope, a heavy, murderous-looking piece of collective property, everlastingly changing hands with brandishing and levelling movements. Then about noon (it was a short turn of duty—the long turn lasted twenty-four hours) another boatful of pilots would relieve us—and we should steer for the old Phœnician port, dominated, watched over from the ridge of a dust-grey arid hill by the red-and-white striped pile of the Notre Dame de la Garde.

All this came to pass as I had foreseen in the fulness of my very recent experience. But also something not foreseen by me did happen, something which causes me to remember my last outing with the pilots. It was on this occasion that my hand touched, for the first time, the side of an English ship.

No fresh breeze had come with the dawn, only the steady little draught got a more keen edge on it as the eastern sky became bright and glassy with a clean, colourless light. It was while we were all ashore on the islet that a steamer was picked up by the telescope, a black speck like an insect posed on the hard edge of the offing. She emerged rapidly to her water-line and came on steadily, a slim hull with a long streak of smoke slanting away from the rising sun. We embarked in a hurry, and headed the boat out for our prey, but we hardly moved three miles an hour.

She was a big, high-class cargo-steamer of a type that is to be met on the sea no more, black hull, with high, white superstructures, powerfully rigged with three masts and a lot of yards on the fore; two hands at her enormous wheel—steam steering-gear was not a matter of course in these days—and with them on the bridge three others, bulky in thick blue jackets, ruddy faced, muffled up, with peaked caps—I suppose all her officers. There are ships I have met more than once and known well by sight, whose names I have forgotten, but the name of that ship seen

once thirty-three years ago in the clear flush of a cold pale sunrise I have not forgotten. How could I—the first English ship on whose side I ever laid my hand! The name—I read it letter by letter on the bow—was *James Westall.* Not very romantic you will say. The name of a very considerable, well-known and universally respected North-country shipowner, I believe. James Westall! What better name could an honourable hard-working ship have. To me the very grouping of the letters is alive with the romantic feeling of her reality as I saw her floating motionless, and borrowing an ideal grace from the austere purity of the light.

We were then very near her and, on a sudden impulse, I volunteered to pull bow in the dinghy which shoved off at once to put the pilot on board while our boat, fanned by the faint air which had attended us all through the night, went on gliding gently past the black glistening length of the ship. A few strokes brought us alongside, and it was then that, for the very first time in my life, I heard myself addressed in English—the speech of my secret choice, of my future, of long friendships, of the deepest affections, of hours of toil and hours of ease, and of solitary hours too, of books read, of thoughts pursued, of remembered emotions,—of my very dreams! And if (after being thus fashioned by it in that part of me which cannot decay) I dare not claim it aloud as my own, then, at any rate the speech of my children. Thus small events grow memorable by the passage of time. As to the quality of the address itself I cannot say it was very striking. Too short for eloquence and devoid of all charm of tone, it consisted precisely of the three words "Look out there," growled out huskily above my head.

It proceeded from a big fat fellow (he had an obtrusive, hairy double chin) in a blue woollen shirt and roomy breeches pulled up very high, even to the level of his breast-bone, by a pair of braces quite exposed to public view. As where he stood there was no bulwark but only a rail and stanchions I was able to take in at a glance the whole of his voluminous person from his feet to the high crown of his soft black hat, which sat like an absurd flanged cone on his big head. The grotesque and massive aspect of that deck hand (I suppose he was that—very likely the lamp-trimmer) surprised me very much. My course of reading, of dreaming and longing for the sea had not prepared me for a sea-brother of that sort. I have never met again a figure in the least like his except in the illustrations to Mr. W. W. Jacob's most entertaining tales of barges and

coasters ; but the inspired talent of Mr. Jacobs for poking endless fun at poor, innocent sailors in a prose which, however extravagant in its felicitous invention, is always artistically adjusted to observed truth, was not yet. Perhaps Mr. Jacobs himself was not yet. I fancy that, at most, if he had made his nurse laugh it was about all he could have managed to achieve at that early date.

Therefore, I repeat, other disabilities apart, I could not have been prepared for the sight of that husky old porpoise. The object of his concise address was to call my attention to a rope which he incontinently flung down for me to catch. I caught it, though it was not really necessary, the ship having no way on her at all. Then everything went on very swiftly. The dinghy came with a slight bump against the steamer's side, the pilot, grabbing the rope ladder, instantly had scrambled half-way up before I knew that our task of boarding was done; the harsh, muffled, clanging of the engine-room telegraph struck my ear, through the iron plate; my companion in the dinghy was urging me to "shove off—push hard"; and when I bore against the smooth flank of the first English ship I ever touched in my life, I felt it already throbbing under my open palm.

Her head swung a little to the west, pointing towards the miniature lighthouse of the Jolliette breakwater, far away there, hardly distinguishable against the land. The dinghy danced a squashy, splashy jig in the wash of the wake and from my seat I followed the *James Westall* with my eyes. Before she had gone in a quarter of a mile she hoisted her flag as the harbour regulations prescribe for arriving and departing ships. I saw it suddenly flicker and stream out on the flagstaff. The Red Ensign! In this pellucid, colourless atmosphere bathing the drab and grey masses of that southern land, the livid islets, the sea of pale glassy blue under the pale glassy sky of that cold sunrise, it was as far as the eye could reach the only spot of ardent colour—flame-like, intense, and presently as minute as the tiny red spark the concentrated reflection of a great fire kindles in the clear heart of a globe of crystal. The Red Ensign, the symbolic, protecting warm bit of bunting flung wide upon the seas, and destined for so many years to be the only roof over my head.

(To be continued)

The Fog

By H. M. Tomlinson

We were homeward bound, four days in front of Christmas, over a flat sea blinding with reflected sunshine, congratulating ourselves on a record winter passage into London. There is but one aphorism at sea which comfortably fits most circumstances : "One never knows."

It might have been June. The pallid blue overhead was hung with flimsy white tapestries, suspended in set loops and folds, too thin to veil the sun, whose track over the sea, down which we were bowling at eleven knots, was incandescent silver. A shade had to be erected over the binnacle for the wheelsman. A few sailing vessels were idling about the bright plain, their canvas hanging like table-cloths. The steamer went over a level keel, with no movement but the tremor of the engines, and our wash astern ran in two straight white lines out of sight. The day had been made for us ; we could be home before midnight, for we should just catch the tide at the Shipwash light and go up on top of it towards Billingsgate.

It was the strange sunset which gave us the first warning. A vague silver flare fell obliquely down behind the thin clouds, and when near the plane gradually formed into a pulsing ruby ball. At sunset, the entire western sea was darkened by the shadow of a low boundary cloud of smoky crimson, as though it were a wall which had been burnt red hot by the sun, and left glowing and smouldering. "I don't like the look of that," said the skipper. "We ought to be at the wharf by midnight, and could, but I'll eat my certificate if we are."

The sea was empty of all traffic. We had the North Channel, one of the busiest routes in the world, entirely to ourselves.

"It looks as though London had been wiped out since we left it," said the skipper.

The Maplin watched us pass in the dusk with its one red eye. We raised all the lights clear and bright. The run was still straight and free. Later, we were sitting round the saloon table, calculating whether she would catch the last train for us, when

everybody jumped at the unexpected clang of the engine-room bell. "Stop her," we heard the man cry, at the telegraph below. We crowded the companion in an effort to reach deck together, and the bell rang often enough, while we were arriving, to drive the staff below distracted.

I got to the side in time to see a huge liner's dim shape slide by like a street at night; she would have been invisible but for her row of lights. We could have reached her on a gangway. The man at our wheel was spinning his spokes desperately to avoid banging into vessels we could not see, but whose bells were ringing everywhere about us. We had run full tilt into a fog bank apparently packed with ships, and were saving ourselves and them by guesswork while stopping the way on our boat. The veiled moon was looking over the wall of the fog, and the stars above our deck were bright. But our hull was shoving into a murk which was as opaque as cheese, and had the same flavour. From all directions came the quick ringing of the bells of frightened vessels. Twice across our bows appeared perilous shadows, sprinkled with dim stars, and then high walls went slowly by us. I don't know how long it was before our boat came to a stand, but it was long enough for us. You imagined the presence in the dark of impending bodies, and straining over-side to see them, listening to the sucking of the invisible water, nervously fanned the fog in a ridiculous effort to clear it.

Down our anchor dropped at last, and our own bell then rang as a sign to the invisible flock that we too were harmless. As soon as our unseen neighbours heard our exhaust humming, their continued frantic ringing subsided, and only occasionally they gave a shaking to hear if we answered from the same spot; until at last there was absolute silence, as though all had crept silently away, and left us alone there. So we waited with our riding lights. Our usual lights were only shrouded, for we were fully confident there would be a clearance presently. But the rampart of the fog built itself up, covered the moon, and finally robbed us of the overhead stars. Imprisoned by the thick walls we lay till morning, listening to the doleful tolling of the Mucking bell.

Next morning showed but a weak diffusion of day through a yellow screen. It required a prolonged look to mark even the dead water over-side. Fog is the most doleful of all sea weirds. For nearly a fortnight we had been without rest. We had become used to a little house which was always unstable, and sometimes riotous, between a flying floor and sky. And I was now reeling giddily on a motionlessly dead-level, with soundless unseen waters

below, and a blind dumb world all round. We watched impatiently the slow drift of the fog motes for a change of wind. But the rigging was hoary with frost and the deck was glazed with ice. There was but small hope it would lift. We were interned. Overdue already; within eight miles of a station from which we could be home in thirty minutes; and next week might find us still fretting in our prison.

Sometimes the fog would seem to rise a few feet. The brutal deception was played on us many times, and found us willing victims. A dark cork drifting by some distance out made a focal point in the general yellow and gave an appearance of clearance. Once, parading the deck prison as the man on watch—there was nothing to do but to keep a good look-out and ring the bell at intervals—I made sure I should be the harbinger of good tidings to those below playing cards. A dim line appeared to starboard, and gradually became definite, like a coast showing through a thinning haze. They all came up to watch it. The coast got higher and darker; and then suddenly changed into a long wide trail of floating cinders. The fog curtains moved closer than ever again. We were the centre of a dead world, and our own place a quiet and narrow tomb. Our scared neighbours of the night before seemed to have gone. But presently an invisible boat near us, hilariously lachrymose, produced in a series of horrible moans from her steam tooter the tunes of "Auld Lang Syne" and "Home, Sweet Home." A hidden river audience shouted with cheerful laughter. It quite brightened us to hear the prisoners jolly in the next cell. But for the rest of the day the place was mute, the fog deepened to ochre at evening, then became black, excepting where the riding lights made circles of luminous gauze. Every miserable watcher who came down that night, muffled and frost-sparkled, for a drink of hot coffee, just drank it and went on deck again without a word. There was no need to ask him anything.

The next morning came suffused through the same dense cloud, which still drifted by on a light air, interminable. Our prison seemed shorter than ever. Once only that day a fancied clearance showed our skipper a lane on the water. He up-anchored and moved on a hundred yards. The mute river rang immediately with a tumult of bells.

We had a perishable cargo, we were ready to take any chance sooner than stay where we were, so when a deck hand on the third morning came down with the thawing fog dripping from his moustache, and told the skipper it was clearing a little, everybody tumbled up to station at once.

THE FOG

I saw from the *Speedwell* as rare and unearthly a picture as will ever fall to my lot. The bluish twilight of dawn seemed to radiate from our vessel's sides, revealing, through the thinning veil, a vague, still world without floor, ceiling or walls. There was no water, except a small oval on which the *Speedwell* sat like a show model on glass; no sky, and no horizon.

The cosmos was grouped about our centre, inert, voiceless, full of unawakened surprising shapes, such as we could not have dreamed of; those near to us more approaching our former experiences, those on the increasing outer radii diminishing in the opaque dawn to grotesque indeterminate things, beyond all remembrance and recognition. We only were substantial and definite. But placed about us, suspended in translucent night, were the vertical shadows of what once were ships, but were steamers and sailers without substance now, shrouded spectres that had left the wrecks of their old hulls below, their voyages finished, and had been raised to our level in a new place boundless and serene, with the inconceivable profundities beneath; and there we kept them suspended on one plane by superior gravity and body, as though we were the sun of this new system in the heavens. Above them was void, and beyond were the blind distances of the outer world, and below the abyss of space still. Their lights reached out and gathered to our centre, an incoming of shining ropes, the spiritual mooring lines.

Our cable, crawling upwards through the hawse pipe, shattered the spell; and when our hooter warned that we were moving, a wild pealing commenced which continued all the long slow drift down to Gravesend. Eight miles of ships, and no doubt we commenced far from the end of the procession. Barges, colliers, liners, clippers, ghost after ghost shaped ahead and glided astern. Several times the fog thickened again, but the skipper never took way off her while he could make a course with the sight of a ship ahead, for our cargo could not be trifled with, our vessel was small, and our captian had nerves of iron. We drifted stern first on the flood, with half turns of the propeller for steering purchase, till a boatman told us we were off Gravesend. I took no more risks. That boat was exactly what I was longing for.

It was something to have the steady paving-stones under one's feet again. You would never imagine how lovely are naphtha flares in the fog, and the dingy people in the muddy ways, and the houses which are always in the same place. It was substance at last, and security.

A Certainty

By Olive Garnett

It was at my cousin's, after a Woman's Suffrage meeting; most of the company had departed, and we half-dozen others would probably have done the same on the maid's coming in to light the lamps, had not my cousin intercepted her at the door, requesting instead a fresh brew of tea. We drew nearer the fire awaiting this, and the talk took a somewhat intimate turn. No, I am not going to serve up for you the preluding remarks of interest, half revelations and comments on your sex, flattering or otherwise, but I shall not deny that of course they sooner or later led to the universal topic, which then exclusively held the ground and livened up the stuffy and exhausted intellectual atmosphere. I cannot deny it if I tell you anything at all. You must know that my cousin was the only married woman present; and that overhead her bouncing boys were loudly proclaiming their existence. Of course this fact was making us tentative in our verdicts and surmises, but at last we did reach the goal, not very boldly, of inquiry whether happy married life was indeed, or was not, to be regarded, according to man's teaching, as the crowning aim and glory of the average woman's existence; and, failing any decided pronouncement from her, we there for a full moment had paused. Suddenly a slender, youngish-looking woman, dressed in grey, unidentified by me, who had not previously spoken, said, "Oh, but I *know* it is."

These words were quietly uttered, but with such intense conviction that my neighbour, who had theosophical leanings, took her up quickly: "I suppose you acquired your certainty in some former state of existence?" To which the lady in grey, apparently not at all surprised at such a question, responded: "I have wondered myself, but think the likelihood all the other way; that is, that most probably I have a contemporaneous or even a fore-knowledge; but"—hastening away from that perilous ground, and glancing apologetically at us—"if you will hear me for a few minutes, I will give you the facts, and

you can then judge for yourselves. I have never mentioned before what I am now going to tell you, and have no faintest memory of what I shall describe having at any time taken place in my normal life. Simply our meeting and talk and your doubts have stirred me; and I feel that I ought not to withhold my own experience on such an important matter if it will be of any service."

"Please do tell us, Honoria," said my cousin kindly, and, as I fancied, with a shade of indulgence, "we are all attention." Though in the lady's appearance there was nothing much to remark, her voice was of most unusual beauty, and it had been tantalising me with some obscure associations. The name Honoria, bringing to mind "Onora, Onora, her mother is calling," cleared these up, for the voice primarily recalled to me the songs dated 1850 or thereabouts, "Oh, ma Charmante," "Oh, fair Dove, Oh, fond Dove!" &c., which my mother used to sing to us children, and which, no doubt, her mother had sung to her. Is it extravagant to surmise then that certain of its vibrations had come down to "Honoria" from that time? However that may be, in my mind's eye I once again saw our old, stiff-keyed, sweet-toned piano, with its rose-coloured, pleated silk front, and the bound music-book with worn, cloth covers, and my mother's initials in gilt on the outside. Meanwhile this beautiful but melancholy voice, this voice with its full, touching and suggestive range, began with shy animation:

"It is just a dream I had, but some dreams are more vivid to us, and affect us more deeply than what we call reality, are, in fact, a more vital reality. I dreamed that I was sitting upon the floor in the middle of a large bare room, lighted, I think, from overhead, so that it may, so that I almost think it must have been a studio or built-out annexe to a dwelling-house—one recently moved into, I should say, for the room had such an empty appearance that I can remember seeing in it only a wide, square sofa. I remember also that its spaciousness and unfinished look vaguely irritated me, as if these were the known preferences, as opposed to mine, of some one else; I inclining, so it seemed, to the comfortable and even to the cosy. However, I also remember the consoling thought that into this emptiness I might presently be able to introduce some modifications according to my own taste.

"Seated with me, close up against me, and slightly in front of me on the floor was my son, a boy of about seventeen, with a remarkably small head—always, I knew, suggestive to me of Greek statues—crisp, red-gold hair and a very clear skin.

In my dream I was immensely surprised that a son of mine should have this kind of hair and skin, and sought in vain in my memory for any tradition of it in my own family, and felt myself being obliged to concede that it must come, atavistically, from my husband's. I knew that I liked it, however, strange though it was to me. My boy's cool clear skin smelt very sweet, like an infant's, and I fell to kissing the smooth neck with its faint down, behind the ear. I had an arm round him, and he was telling me so gaily what he had been doing and what some one in authority had said praising him, that I also felt very happy. I can't say whether he was talking about an examination or about games; I was lending but half an ear, subconsciously pondering that I had a son, unlike his father, unlike myself, and of such exceptional promise, who loved me unquestioningly, and still looked to me as his Providence.

"My daughter, a year older, was standing near us. She had dark brown hair, was more strongly built than I, and on the whole resembled both her parents. Of a critical habit of mind, she was feeling impatient and slightly jealous, with cause, of the affection I lavished on her more dearly loved brother. To this dumb feeling, without looking towards her, I was silently responding: 'Oh, but you have more of your father's love, you are *his* girl, and the characteristics in which you resemble me are for that reason tiresome to me, I know them so intimately; while for him they are a continual delight. Sometimes the inflections in your voice so exactly reproducing mine exasperate me, while to me your brother's are always fresh and inspiring.'

"We were at this stage when the door, afar off in the corner, opened, and their father came in. He threw me a rapid glance and silently embraced our daughter. I slightly resented the special understanding between them. But, immediately releasing her, he came to me, and drew me to the sofa which stood a little to one side, well out into the room. And at once I nestled up to him, feeling both his strangeness and his nearness, and proud of my being compact, small, delicately made in contrast to his loosely built frame. It was so sweet!"

There was a pause, as if for intensity of precious memory, and the exquisitely varied tones, which in such an apparently effortless way had banished commonplace, causing the very air, so used up, to palpitate with emotion, resumed:

"Our children began talking of book-bindings, and their father said to me, quite as if jingling money in his pockets or fingering a cheque-book: 'Well, how would you like your books bound, in calf, vellum, white and gold, or how?' Evidently

books were considered by all three to be my greatest material treasure, and the very first objects upon which to spend money ; and I was at that moment cognisant that we had been poor and had gone through many struggles, that in my heart I had sometimes blamed my husband, felt uneasy for the future and distrustful of his assurances ; but that now he was proved justified ; and that though he had not exhibited any genius, he had demonstrated very marked ability. Fortune was smiling upon us. Perhaps this husband of mine was an artist of some kind, possibly an inventor ; I can't say. I only know that at that moment my heart was brimful of happiness : I could not answer for tears, and I hid my face on his breast.

" ' Well, speak, tell me,' he said anxiously, and with impatience veiling an old fear of his that all might not be well, since I was fastidious, with secret reserves of feeling, and, often, quite opposed tastes. But my heart was so full of love, of love and of happy pride, that I felt I could consent to any extravagance, anything distasteful to me personally : what did it matter ? All my sufferings seemed recompensed to me, and at that moment I seemed to divine the reason for them all, rejoicing with the fullest joy that I on my side, in spite of all doubts and hesitations, had done my best. My face was pressed into his brown beard, and the wetness and salt of my tears mingled with its scent and the odour of the stuff of his coat ; mingled strangely with the realisation how utterly unlike he was to our son ; and how rich I was to possess two entirely individual beings to love. I added my daughter as an afterthought. Half-circled by his arm and shoulder, pressed into his breast, drinking in my happiness, I managed to raise my head and stammer out : ' I like everything just as it is in our home.' ' Or as it ever will be, or has been,' I meant them to infer.

" Our children applauded rapturously as if they were only waiting for the licence of such a declaration to sign and seal our four-square bliss : and their father on his side was silently willing me to understand that his efforts—even when, manlike, he did not tell me so—had all been for me and mine : and that this moment was his entirely satisfying reward.

" I buried my face in his breast again, but I don't know how to describe to you the intensity and depth of happiness, the ecstasy I was feeling ; because we have as yet no adequate language for the registering of such fine and full emotions ; because in such moments we taste the flavour of whole existences, as in a flash we gather the mystical meaning of our doubts and our failings, and our indomitable strivings onward. Recall

similar episodes in your own experience. Perhaps in quality my ecstasy was second only to those minutes or quarters of an hour of bliss without earthly alloy which, through the intercession of some saints, we are allowed for our comfort and after guidance very occasionally to spend in paradise.

"Yes, separate from my own joy so cast up in relief by the shadows of my own many previous pains, my husband and I were mutually very, very content; in communion with our children, but also with a deep secret knowledge as yet unopen to them, a knowledge between us two alone. We had at last our heart's desire. In my dream my husband's hand clasped mine strongly; and I knew that we two were exactly as our God intended us to be." She went on very earnestly: "Believe me, it was for us both an absolute certainty, and that is why, though I am unmarried, and not likely now to marry in my everyday life, I used the word 'know.' I have had the experience, and nothing can henceforth shake me in my conviction. Evidently we possess some kinds of very important truths inaccessible to our normal consciousness, but which may have a deep and far-reaching effect upon our lives and the lives of others. I have never met, for instance," she added, "any man in this life whom I felt I could love as I loved husband and son in my dream."

The voice with its variety of exquisite modulations ceased: it was as if some subtle instrument toned had stopped playing in the room. An embarrassed pause succeeded in which my lowered gaze remarked the crossed feet in *glacé* button boots of the lady opposite. I remarked them with relief, as a momentary respite in the effort to adjust my turbulent thoughts. Meanwhile the banalities of ordinary talk broke out in exclamations. The theosophist in particular grew voluble and persistent in query. But the lady in grey rose, and saying that she must now really not stay a minute longer, in spite of lame efforts to detain her, made her adieux. As she reached the door, it opened, and two maids appeared bringing fresh tea and lights.

The Holy Mountain

By Stephen Reynolds

(Author of "A Poor Man's House")

VII

Another, a far less edifying but much more amusing scene was enacted that Sunday evening.

Mr. Ganthorn's servant spent her time from half-past nine to ten o'clock in bidding a long "So long!" to her sweetheart. Then, as the clock struck, she said: "Bye-bye, 'Arry. You *must* go now. So long."

Whereupon the young man peeped outside the gate, returned to take another kiss from his fair lady, and did go. The front door banged. A light flitted about. Within five minutes the dwelling and its precincts were quite quiet.

Such an idyllic little scene could hardly have taken place had Mrs. Ganthorn been at home. She was visiting her unmarried sister, where, indeed, the childless woman stayed during the greater part of the year; for she found that distance lent a very considerable enchantment to her sharp little husband. He, on his side, quickly lived down the gossip which had its origin in an absentee wife. Away, she could not gall his cool sceptical intellect with her sloppy emotionalism; and the arrangement was particularly happy in that it left him a much greater freedom to entertain his friends.

Mr. Ganthorn's back sitting-room was a place outside the meaning of the Acts which have from time to time been passed in the hope of putting a check to drinking and gambling. It was, in fact, an unregistered, uninspected club. When completely sober, he was an objectionable little man; everybody in Trowbury knew that; but when he had taken something to drink he was the best of hosts; hospitable, pungent and amusing, according to the standards of Trowbury; and, above all, when his wife was away he could without let or hindrance invite anybody and everybody to take a glass or glasses at his house at any hour of the day or night.

Shortly after the maidservant had gone to bed, he came up the street attended by Messrs. Trotman, Clinch and Borbell—the last-named being a cattle dealer of astonishing dimensions and reputed wealth. The time of night was five minutes past ten; precisely five minutes, that is, after the closing of the Blue Boar bar.

The merry party stood outside the gate for a while, looking at the stars, smoking, and waiting for Mr. Ganthorn formally to invite them in.

"Young George Potterne's going it, isn't he?" Mr. Clinch was saying.

"Ought to have been turned out an hour before closing time to-night," said Mr. Trotman. "I'd have a law to prevent all young fellows drinking before they're twenty-five or so."

"Did you?" Mr. Ganthorn asked.

"I knew when to stop. . . ."

"More than you do now, old chap."

There was a hearty laugh, broken into by the husky voice of Mr. Borbell, who said in his hearty fashion: "He's like his grandfather. . . ."

"*You* didn't know his wusshup's grandfather."

Another laugh.

"Young George Potterne, I means. I mind buying scores of beasts from old John James Potterne. I've driven many a hard bargain with him when he was sober, but when he was a bit in liquor. . . . Lor' bless you! he always got the top hand o' me then."

"Who's that got the better of you, Borbell?"

"Why, as I was saying, old John James Potterne did—when he'd had a drop. And what's bred in the bone comes out in the flesh, I say. All they Potterne's be twice the men drunk to what they be sober."

"So are we all. All!" said Mr. Ganthorn. "Now, gentlemen, what brew of wet damnation is it to-night?"

By this time they were all well inside the house. "Try another chair, Borbell," said Mr. Ganthorn. The general laugh was increased to a roar of merriment when he added, "My wife bought that little one at the Emporium the last time she visited me."

It is not difficult to understand why Mr. Ganthorn, in spite of his acidity, was accounted the best entertainer in Trowbury. He dug at all his guests impartially, so putting them at ease with one another; and when that can be brought about, of what importance comparatively is the nature of the host?

A violent knocking at the door was heard.

"George Potterne himself, I'll lay five to one—in three-penny bits," exclaimed Mr. Ganthorn.

"Done!" replied Mr. Borbell.—"Damme, 'tis! I thought I knew his knock better than that."

George Potterne lurched in. "Thought you'd given me the slip, did you?" he greeted them. "I was up to your little tricks. Trust me! The three of you won seventeen and ten-pence out of me last Thursday. Now you've got to give me my revenge."

"No cards on Sunday," said Mr. Trotman, "or I go."

Mr. Ganthorn took up the cue. "Look here, George, you're in my house, and I sha'n't have card-playing on Sunday."

"Course not," Mr. Borbell added. "You youngsters don't care for hog, dog, or devil nowadays."

George Potterne was fumbling in his inside breast-pocket. "Look here, you chaps," he went on with unsober inconsequence, "I've got something to show you 'll make you sit up." He pulled out a red morocco pocket-book.

"Who gave you that, George?"

"My sister. Rather nice, ain't it? Better'n most women's presents.—There look! How d' you like that? Latest from Paris. Got it when I was up in town."

"What were you up in town for?"

"Never you mind."

A card, shaped like a folded butterfly was handed round.

"Pretty toy for boys," Mr. Ganthorn remarked. "I've seen better."

Mr. Clinch turned it over and over, opened it and shut it two or three times, as if he would have liked to stock it at the Emporium. "Cleverly got up," he observed.

Mr. Borbell said he had done with things of that sort, whilst the Mayor, after a lengthy and rather shamefaced examination, said emphatically: "If I had my way, I'd soon put an end to things of that sort. Disgraceful!"

"Get out, you old fool!" George Potterne exclaimed. "You'd like one if you could get it quiet—and on the cheap."

"You or me had better go, I think," said his worship with dignity. "If ever you get brought up before me . . ."

"Dry up!"

"Look here, George," Mr. Ganthorn interposed, "you and your butterfly had better go. Time all young people were in bed. Sunday too."

"Sha'n't! I want a game o' nap."

"Let's see. . . . How much is it you owe me? Two five-pound notes, six pounds in gold, ten and six for whisky. . ."

"All right, old chap. You've got security—took good care of that. I'm going. You needn't throw a fellow's debts in his face."

"You try throwing what you owe me into mine."

"Oh, shut up!"

Exit Mr. George Potterne junior.

For a few minutes the remaining four men sipped their drinks in silence.

Said Mr. Clinch at last: "Who's going to be mayor next year?"

"You, of course. It's your turn."

"I can't, I tell you. I can't. Expenses of enlargement and bad debts . . ."

"You'll have to if we make you, or else pay up the fifty-pound fine."

"Look here, I can't; not next year. I can't really. A bit later—then I'll be mayor willingly, and do it well."

"Who *is* to be mayor then?"

"I tell you what, gentlemen," said Mr. Borbell with mock solemnity. "Mr. Trotman here is always talking about Trowbury, and saying it only wants to be known how progressive and pretty and cetera the town is, for people with money to come and live here, and works and businesses and such-like. Well, his son's been and got hisself known with a vengeance if the newspapers is true. Why don't you make Mr. Alec Trotman mayor?"

"What!" cried Mr. Trotman. But it was evident the idea pleased him.

"Make young Trotman mayor," continued Mr. Borbell. "No reason as I can see why a son shouldn't follow his father. You were pleased enough when young Paton was mayor just before his father died and only a year after his father too."

"The expense . . ." Mr. Trotman began.

"Pooh!" exclaimed Mr. Ganthorn. "Don't tell me you haven't made anything out of the mayor's salary. I'd keep the office in the family if I were you."

"He'll make some money out of this Holy Mountain job, won't he; or you will?"

"I can't say," replied Mr. Trotman. "And I'm not at liberty to tell you anything about it. You can see all there is to be known in the newspapers."

"In the *Halfpenny Press?*" Mr. Ganthorn jeered.

"Let's have a rubber of whist," said Mr. Trotman.

"Thought you didn't play cards on Sunday?"

"'Twill be Monday by the time you've got the cards out and dealt."

"Well, anyhow, is it settled young Trotman's to be mayor next year?"

"Yes, of course 'tis. Isn't it, Trotman?"

"If the town confers that honour. . . ."

"Drat the town and its honour! We're the honourable town. If we say so, he will be, and then let 'em object if they like and how they like. That's done. Cut for partners. Shilling points? Refresh your glasses, gentlemen. Forget yourselves."

With full glasses, free tongues, and a merry pack of cards will we leave the leading burgesses of Trowbury. The game obliterated all discussion about the Holy Mountain. The petrified brains of Trowbury were, indeed, unfitted to deal with anything that had developed to such dimensions and intricacy. London might stir itself; but Trowbury. . . . It was the centre of the storm and, as such, calm.

VIII

On Monday morning both Mrs. Trotman and Julia received Sunday letters from Alec.

He told his mother shortly that he was enjoying himself awfully in London and that everybody was awfully nice; that Sir Pushcott Bingley was very nice and very busy; that Mr. Fulton took him all about London on a motor-car; that lots of people seemed to know him; that a gramophone thing had spoken for him at the Crystal Palace, where the light had hurt his eyes and he didn't know whether it was supposed to be minstrels or a service. Finally, he said that he didn't much like wine and that he had a rather awful stomach-ache. He omitted to say that he was engaged to appear in a patriotic ballet at a music-hall. In fact, he hardly realised it himself.

The stomach-ache took up the major part of Mrs. Trotman's attention. She greatly feared that stomach-ache and would at once have set out for London had not her husband pooh-poohed the idea and called her a silly old hen—the one jibe which always tamed her solicitude for her son. After much worry and more talk, she contented herself with sending to Alec by express post a large-sized bottle of the local chemist's Electric Stomach Elixir.

Julia Jepp's letter was by far the longer:

"DEAR JULIE,—You did not mean what you said when I was leaving Trowbury, did you. I do love you, Julie. Write and say you did not, I cannot think why you did.

"Julie, I'm having such an awfully jolly time and everybody is awfully kind and lots of people know me. They are not so stuck up in London as they are in Trowbury.

"You never saw such a lot of people as there were at the Crystal Palace to hear me speak. I should think there was nearly a million or at least 10,000, all there to hear your Alec speak and I didn't make a speech after all, I'll tell you really only you must not split or else Mr. Fulton says the game will be up if people get to know. Mr. Fulton and a clergyman from the mission made up a speech for me and made me read it out twice for practice. Then I spoke it into a gramophone thing and it was a great big one with four big funnels that spoke it for me at the Crystal Palace, only it wasn't mine really. I never saw such a lot of people, you could not nearly see to the end of them and their faces were like conffetti what they throw at weddings. There were a lot of bishops there and all sorts, when the machine had finished talking they clapped and made such a noise and sang for he's a jolly good fellow several times and then a man said let us pray through a speaking trumpet and Sir Pushcott Bingley said for God's sake let's get out of this and we went.

"I've got to go to the Neeopolitan Music Hall to-morrow but not speak. Sir P. says speaking is not my strong point, he says it is better for me to be ornamental. He has not asked me to write an article for his paper yet, but I expect he will soon. He says I shall have quite money enough to do what I want to on and perhaps more if things go all right, I wish I could go with you on the Downs to-night. I have been on a motor with Mr. Fulton to see Ramshorn Hill in Acton, it looks miserable and dirty. Hoping this will find you well as it leaves me only I have got a stummycake.—Your loving ever and ever

"ALEXANDER TROTMAN."

Nothing but real love could have given Chop-Allie Trotman the energy to make such a prodigious effort in the way of letter-writing.

Julia was proud and frightened and softened by turns. But Alec's success did in the end only strengthen her determination to go on being a martyr. It made her feel a good and disinterested onlooker. It overcame her motherliness. The worst vices of such women as Julia Jepp are virtues out of place.

IX

Whilst Mrs. Trotman was suffering from suppressed solicitude for Alexander's digestion, was taking the servant into her confidence and pouring forth a tale of gastric woe, Mr. Trotman sat over his third cup of tea with the calm air of a philosopher and man of sense, and read the morning's *Halfpenny Press*.

"If Alec is really ill," he said, "you can be quite sure Sir Pushcott will have the best doctors. There's nothing second-rate about Sir Pushcott Bingley.

"No, I know there's not," said Mrs. Trotman in tones of unconviction.

"Well, then, for goodness' sake be quiet!"

The *Halfpenny Press* was indeed most interesting. It contained a special four-page supplement, filled with pictures of the Crystal Palace Empire Revival Mission and a squib-like account thereof. No less than one whole page was given up to correspondence, *From Our Readers*.—Two-score donkeys nibbling at a carrot.

One busybody of the parasitical world which collects and administers subscriptions said at great length that, in the case of the Wonder Worker being left unrewarded, he was prepared to receive sums of money from a halfpenny (only the price of a newspaper) upwards, towards the cost of purchasing a life annuity for him who had shown mankind that miracles were as possible in this our twentieth century as in the olden days. Such a demonstration, the busybody pointed out, could but infuse courage into the hearts of all those who were fighting the good fight on behalf of the immutable truths of religion.

An editorial note, however, while commending the busybody as a truly religious patriot, mentioned that proposals were already afoot in high and influential circles to give the Holy Mountain to Mr. Alexander Trotman, the mover of it; or, at least, to lease it to him from the Crown on very advantageous terms. Ramshorn Hill, now justly called the Holy Mountain, being Crown land, was national property, and, therefore, this brilliant proposal would enable every British man, woman, and child substantially to show their gratitude to Mr. Trotman—whether they wished to or not. *Vox populi, vox Dei!* In such a way the right-minded majority could compel the careless, unpatriotic, irreligious minority to contribute towards that recognition which no Britisher should wish to deny. There could be no shadow of doubt that Mr. Trotman would use the gift in such a way that the best interests of religion and the glory

of the British Empire would be equally advanced. So said the *Halfpenny Press*.

Notice was given that the Neapolitan Music Hall would be closed on that (Monday) evening in order to prepare a grand patriotic Church and Empire Ballet in which Mr. Alexander Trotman would take part. The Mountain-Mover would thus be visible to all who were unable or unaccustomed to attend revivals. The *Halfpenny Press* would book orders for seats by telephone. A letter from the Archbishop of All the Empire's chaplain ran : " His Grace desires me to say that he considers the Church and Empire Ballet, reverently treated, to be an excellent idea."

On the morrow, the only authorised biography of Mr. Alexander Trotman would commence in the columns of the *Halfpenny Press*. It would be written, under Mr. Trotman's supervision, by that brilliant journalist and *littérateur*, Mr. John Fulton.

The front page of the newspaper was taken up in its entirety by an advertisement of the Neapolitan Music Hall—refined, mirthful, beautiful, national, fully licensed. Half the back page was devoted to a glowing advertisement of the *Times*' monumental work on earthquakes. The remaining portions of the paper were occupied by short synopses of foreign affairs and parliamentary proceedings, and accounts of three interesting murders and two peculiarly distressing suicides. Publicity was given an unconfirmed telegram to the effect that an Indian fakir had succeeded in overturning the summit of Mt. Everest.

It was very noticeable that the *Halfpenny Press*, hitherto in frantic opposition to the inefficiency and inertia of the government, was now become a supporter of the ministry and looked forward to a long life of beneficence for it.

" That *is* curious, if you like ! " remarked Mr. Trotman judicially.

X

The Neapolitan, famous even among music-halls for its topicality and its original turns, did not now belie its reputation. There was no precedent in the theatrical world for the energy with which the Church and Empire Ballet was hustled upon the stage nor for the vigour with which it was advertised. The properties of a patriotic ballet were sorted out on the Sunday. Ecclesiastical costumes and apparatus were gathered together on the Monday morning. One or two clergymen, believers

in the possibilities of stage influence for good, gave ready help in matters of which the management possessed but little experience. Scene-painters worked day and night with pneumatic paint-brushes, inventing and adapting. Opticians busied themselves with dissolving views and novel effects in stage lighting. The orchestra practised with food and drink on stools beside it. Rehearsals were almost continuous; the stage-manager's voice filled the hall without intermission. The production of the Church and Empire Ballet was, indeed, a work of concerted genius.

One grand dress rehearsal—and that without the central figure of the ballet—took place on Tuesday. Alec, in fact, was the most indispensable and the least necessary personage in the whole affair. Sir Pushcott Bingley's stipulation that he should have nothing to say and nothing to do, except be present on the stage, was ridiculed by the manager, who staked his reputation on being able to drill the young man into something that would catch on. Sir Pushcott therefore invited him to meet Mr. Alexander Trotman at lunch. There the manager drew him affably into conversation, and soon became finally convinced that the Wonder-Worker had better remain quite a lay figure.

Nevertheless, he kept one small item up his sleeve.

Alec was duller than usual. The unwonted stir and excitement had completely dazed him. Besides which, he was in pretty constant pain, and now that the bloom of his visit to London had worn off, he was also rather homesick. He hungered after the ministrations of his mother. The delights of Sir Pushcott's table kept up his spirits somewhat; but his appetite was failing, and at lunch on Tuesday he would take nothing except a little lobster salad.

"We shall have to get the doctor to you, young man, I can see," said Sir Pushcott Bingley.

"Dr. Vere M'Lloyd?" Alec asked.

It was the name of his mother's favourite physician at Trowbury.

Most successful men attribute their success to some one virtue that comes easy to them. In Sir Pushcott's case, the fetish was punctuality. Arriving at the Neapolitan rather too early, they were shown into a stage box.

"Sit back," the manager told Alec. "We shan't want you till the last moment. But you be ready when you're called. There'll be a row if we're too long getting it on. Our house isn't used to much curtain. Sit back—here."

Alec sat back as requested, and watched a bare-chested

woman in black tights showing off her troupe of performing cats. The band played ; the woman strutted about the stage, tapping the cats with a beribboned cane, bowing to the music, to the cats and to the audience like a mechanical toy. How much more dignified the snarling cats than the swaggering woman ! Alec was delighted with them, and would have clapped naïvely had not the *Halfpenny Press* man touched him on the arm and held up a warning finger.

The performer kissed herself and her cats off the stage amid a moderate applause. She was a falling star. The Church and Empire Ballet was to come.

For some time the curtain remained down to the music of the orchestra and the stage hammers. The audience began to be impatient. They whistled, they stamped, they boo'd. Somebody flung a ginger-beer bottle at the curtain. It hit a painted languishing Italian lover on the nose so neatly that one of the gallery gods cried out, " Give 'em another just there ! " An orange followed. A penny bun, being less weighty, fell short and hit the conductor of the orchestra on the head. The most softly captivating, and the loudest, strains of the orchestra were alike powerless to check the rising enthusiasm for this music-hall version of Old Aunt Sally. Turning down the lights only made the musicians' heads into the target, instead of the lovers on the curtain. A flautist had a tooth knocked out and his skilful lip cut.

Suddenly Long Willie, the popular comedian of the moment, bounced along the stage before the curtain. He stretched out a ragged skinny arm, made a familiar face, and shouted, " Just you wait a minute. I'll revive you ! "

A quick change and he re-entered as a typical revivalistic parson. The audience, at the gleeful sanctimoniousness of his face and walk, burst into a roar of laughter.

The painted lovers and the musicians' heads were saved.

Long Willie pulled some underclothing out of the end of his trouser-leg and placed it on the ground to imitate a little hill. On the top of it he carefully planted a flower. Then, having retired a few paces, he walked towards the little hill, his eyes cast heavenwards and his finger downwards, saying : " Get thee to the George and Dragon. I am coming." He tripped, fell backwards on the little hill, squashing it, and rose like a schoolboy after a caning. " How *I* move mountains ! " he said.

The audience shrieked with merriment. Alec hid his head. Sir Pushcott Bingley reddened and rang the bell.

The manager himself appeared.

"Stop that!" Sir Pushcott commanded.

"What?"

"That travesty. Stop it."

"But I can't."

"We go at once . . ."

"Well. . . . Can't see what there is to object. . . . All right."

Long Willie was called off the stage.

Before long the manager returned to the box for Alec. Already the orchestra was playing *Rule Britannia*. Alec was led behind the scenes, among a marvellous complexity of girders, beams, ropes and properties—all the hastily prepared paraphernalia of the Church and Empire Ballet. Right at the back of the stage they came to a large mound, an imitation hill, against which there rested a ladder. The manager placed in Alec's hand a stick with a bit of red, white and blue cloth nailed to it. "Look here," he said, "when you hear them begin *God Save the King*, you stand up and wave this. D'you see? That's all you've got to do. When they play *God Save the King*, mind; not before."

Alec took the stick. He was just sufficiently confused to do what he was told without demur; to put his trust in anybody and nobody. And that gnawing pain. . . .

"Now then, up you go! You'll find a place to sit on at the top. Stay there till you hear *God Save the King*, and then. . . . You know."

"All right," said Alec. The pain made his breath short.

He climbed the ladder on all fours, like a dog going upstairs, sat down, and waited. The ladder rose on its end, turned over, disappeared. Time seemed long up there, and the place all the darker for the little light that filtered in. He was almost frightened; was wondering indeed whether the hill was safe to slide down, until a voice came up from below: "Y'all right there?"

"Yes," replied Alec manfully.

"They've started. Remember!"

A young man, sitting on an artificial eminence in semi-darkness at the back of a London stage, and wishing himself at home in a sleepy country town. . . .

XI

Never in theatrical history had exceedingly powerful magic lanterns, cinematographs and dissolving-view apparatus been

so brilliantly combined with all the ordinary spectacular and panoramic resources of the stage. Hardly any among the enormous and enthusiastic audience which crowded the Neapolitan Music Hall—sitting, standing, lounging, in defiance of County Council regulations—hardly any, except some scientists present, could tell where illusion ended and make-believe began, so triumphantly had stagecraft and optics come to the aid of Church, Empire and the management.

To the strains of *Rule Britannia* the curtain rose, disclosing another on which was painted (or optically cast) a map of the known world, on Mercator's projection, with the British Imperial possessions coloured a very bright red.

A moving finger appeared, pointing to the British Isles. It travelled to the prairies of Canada, and thence, across the continent of North America, down the Atlantic Ocean, to the malarial West Coast of Africa. By way of St. Helena, it proceeded to the Transvaal; then crossed the Indian Ocean and Australia to antipodal New Zealand. From the northern islands of Australasia it moved to India and up the Red Sea to Egypt. It traversed the Mediterranean, resting a moment at Gibraltar. Finally, ascending the Bay of Biscay and the English Channel it pointed exactly at London.

Whereupon the finger changed to a Royal Standard and Union Jack, interlaced with a cross between them; and the emblem swelled and grew till it spread all over the world. *Rule Britannia* was repeated at the orchestra's loudest. Everything faded. The music ceased.

There was much applause.

The curtain rose again on a scene of embarkation. To the tune of *See the Conquering Hero Comes* there passed slowly and with dignified gait across the stage, to a great ship, missionaries with rapt looks, bearing crosses, and privates of the army in fighting kit with rifles; colporteurs bearing Bibles of all shapes and sizes, and engineers with matlocks, spades and surveying instruments; red-cross nurses and sisters of medical missions; clergymen and merchants carrying Brummagem ware wrapped up in the flag; dignitaries of the Church and starched officers of the army; finally a field-marshal in full uniform together with a bishop in cope and mitre, who had borne before him a richly jewelled pastoral staff on which the lights of the music-hall flashed and glittered.

The martial music changed imperceptibly into a hymn, and, whilst the audience listened in wonder to the noises of a ship getting under way, the stage became totally dark.

THE HOLY MOUNTAIN

A transfused glimmer brightened into sunshine and disclosed an Indian encampment in old Canada. Afar, snow-clad mountains were brightly visible; in the foreground stood several wigwams about which squaws were busy with their primitive household work. A party of Red Indians approached warily with hostile intent. One of them sprang forward, yelling his war-cry, and seized by the hair a beautiful girl who was reclining in the entrance of the largest wigwam. To keep her quiet, he knocked her on the head. The owners of the wigwams returned bearing spoils of the chase from which blood dripped. There was a fierce fight, so wild that the audience could distinguish plainly neither the combatants nor what they were about. They saw only, with tight apprehension, the beautiful girl being dragged backwards and forwards across the stage. Tomahawks flourished. Bloody scalps swung on high. Then it was that the Church and Empire Procession passed along the side of the stage, rifles to the shoulder and the emblems of religion held aloft. The fighters were stricken into stillness. The light died down.

When next the stage was illuminated, the Indians were seen squatted by their wigwams and smoking the pipe of peace. Certain members of the Church and Empire joined in the ceremony, whilst the remainder stood by, singing a hymn. The beautiful girl and a fine young chief were married by the bishop according to Christian rites. The Indians rose and fell in with the Church and Empire Procession, which once more crossed the stage, in a solemn manner, to the sound of triumphant music.

Through the succeeding darkness there came a monotonous throbbing and jarring that made the more sensitive among the audience shudder. The sound, the horrible beating sound, gradually developed into a savage and voluptuous music, made up of rhythmic discords. When the stage lightened a little, so that black figures could just be distinguished, flitting about in the darkness, the rattling wail of the music became as furious as a tropical storm. The scene was a small clearing between the tree-trunks and tendrils of a swampy West African forest—one of those orgies to which from time to time frenzied negroes abandon themselves. A dim fire in the centre of the clearing threw strange streaks of light on the dancers around it; who were apparently naked; on the foliage and tree-trunks and on the slimy ground; but it illuminated nothing. The music alone, beating ever and ever more fiercely, suggested the weird depravity of the dance: the dancers themselves remained always more than half invisible, black against blackness, a shadowed

rhythm on the darkness, dancing wildly to a mysterious music, rising, falling, whirling, jarring. . . .

Fiercer grew the mad orgie—awakening a latent savagery, visions of unimagined lustfulness, in the audience, till many ached and twitched to join the negroes. Suddenly at the side of the stage appeared the Church and Empire Procession, rifle and crosses uplifted; and the dancers, screaming, rushed to the back and there crouched down in a fearful heap.

For a moment darkness: then the music changed to a fresh, cool gladness, while the missionaries and privates, the colporteurs and engineers, the red-cross nurses and sisters of medical missions, the clergymen and merchants, the dignitaries and officers, the field-marshal and bishop, filed past the desolate scene of the orgie, accompanied by regenerate negroes now clad respectably in white duck trousers.

In the next scene, the ship of Church and Empire appeared steaming along beneath the cliffs of a rocky island. The ship's company were assembled on deck. Bishop and field-marshal stood by an altar draped with the flag. 'Twas Sunday service aboard, and they were singing a hymn the words of which, to the audience, seemed far distant and indistinguishable; nearly overwhelmed by the plash of the sea. As the ship passed the island, the figure of Napoleon stood forward on a headland. And he doffed his hat.

With the darkening of the stage the hymn died away. Once more the music became barbaric; not voluptuously so this time, but ferociously. There was an unholy dry clacking in it, and, as it were, a reek of blood.

A cannibal feast in New Zealand was revealed. Tattoo'd Maoris, wrapped in blankets, were dancing and gesticulating greedily around a fire by the side of which was a white corpse partially bereft of its limbs. Garments of a missionary and of a European woman were flung over a hovel close by. One of the dancers wore the white woman's hat—a hat trimmed with blue cornflowers which wobbled on his head. Another was kicking his legs in her petticoat. Nearly all of them brandished bones—thigh bones, arm bones, ribs. The skull they used between them like a football. Smears of blood added to the ghastliness of their tattoo'd faces.

Sometimes they gnawed at the bones.

"How horrible!" exclaimed some in the audience.

"It oughtn't to be allowed," said others, not without satisfaction in their voices.

There was a hoot from the gallery.

The cannibal dance grew greedier ; the music louder. Bones were thrown about. The white corpse was seized and dragged nearer the fire. Rude knives. . . .

In a brilliant light at the side of the stage appeared the Church and Empire Procession, crosses and rifles uplifted. The cannibals flung down their bones and human joints ; sank to their knees, heads bowed down. Darkness fell.

When the procession recrossed the stage to the tune of a hymnal march, Maoris convoyed it. They were clothed more amply and in cleaner blankets ; not more than one wife walked lovingly on the arm of each man ; the smears of blood were washed away from their faces, and they were eating fruits.

Four *tableaux vivants*, representing Indian scenes, followed cannibalism. In the first, there was much rejoicing and Eastern magnificence on account of a marriage between infants of high caste. In the second, the child-wife was on her knees weeping, with dishevelled hair, beside the bed of the dying boy, her husband. The voices of wailing women mingled with the sound of the orchestra. Thirdly, came the burning of the boy-husband's body. Flames from the funeral pyre rose luridly heavenward, whilst the little wife in a transport of grief mourned and wailed beside it, not noticing the presence close by of the Church and Empire Procession, rifles and crosses uplifted. Just as the girl-wife in her ecstasy was about to perform the rite of suttee, to immolate herself on the pyre of her youthful husband, a missionary and a soldier sprang forward and amid the plaudits of their comrades dragged her from the flames. The last of the four Indian *tableaux* represented the interior of a mission-house. Representatives of the Church and Empire were ranged solemnly round the walls, singing a hymn and looking on with manifest approval whilst the beautiful girl-widow of high caste, clothed in white, scrubbed the mission-house floor.

The limelight sun went down and rose again over the Garden of Aphrodite in ancient Alexandria. Somewhat unhistorically it was arranged that the pyramids and the Sphinx overlooked the luxuriant place, its palms and large-leaved plants, its fountains and its columns festooned with flowering creepers. Courtesans, long since dead and gone, walked in the garden with voluptuous step, their garments the tall thin draperies of the Greeks. To one among them, the most beautiful, was brought ceremoniously the philtre of love and death. She drank : and to the long-drawn music of the orchestra, to its spiral convolutions of sweet sound, ever rising higher, ever becoming richer and faster, they danced the Dance of Love, which ends in death, in

the Garden of Aphrodite, beneath the pyramids and the Sphinx. They danced till the Garden was a melody of twirling feet and floating filmy draperies and glimmering colours. She who had drunk of the philtre whirled in a sheen of light, adored by all the others; the incarnation of a love and rapture beyond human reach, the symbol of love's uttermost frenzy; until it seemed to the hard-breathing audience that the ballet could no longer go on without becoming really too indecent for the English stage.

Then it was that the Church and Empire Procession appeared, crosses and rifles uplifted; and the ancient courtesans, stricken with a new shame, fled like ripples on a lake.

In the twilight of a moment the Garden of Aphrodite was razed to the ground. The Pyramids and the Sphinx were left alone in the moonlit desert, save that a cross was erected between them, and Church and Empire passed into the distance, behind the Great Pyramid, singing a hymn of rejoicing.

By some optical contrivance, the Sphinx glanced at the cross, and—but without any movement—a look of fear flitted over its immobile face.

This made a great sensation.

Two minor scenes—the ship of Church and Empire saluted by the guns of Gibraltar, and its triumphant approach to the white cliffs of Dover—were introduced between the Dance of Love and what was described on the programme as:

Grand Finale.

Under the Dome of St. Paul's.

THE HOLY MOUNTAIN.

The nave of the national cathedral became gradually brighter, its huge square pillars and vasty spaces dimly lighted by the hanging candelabra, so that the chancel and high altar were invisible and only a glint of the coloured and golden mosaics could be seen. Already there was a great congregation in the nave. They were chanting processional hymns of triumph.

Slowly and with dignified step there filed in the bishop in a resplendent cope and mitre, his jewelled crosier borne aloft before him; the field-marshal carrying his feathered hat and his baton; officers of the army in full uniform and dignitaries of the Church in their canonicals; clergymen in surplices and hoods, and merchants in silk-faced frock-coats; red-cross nurses and sisters of medical missions in their best bonnets; colporteurs with Bibles, and engineers with brand-new matlocks and spades;

soldiers with down-pointing rifles and missionaries with up-pointing crosses; negroes in trousers and their women in what looked like nightshirts; gentle cannibals; the high-caste girl-widow and her glad relatives, now Christians; a bejewelled native prince willing to become the widow's second husband; and the rescued courtesans of old Alexandria, clothed in blouses, skirts and sailor hats.

A man of the audience was heard say to his wife: "Foine! Oin't it, M'rier?"

The gates of the screen opened and the bishop passed within them to the sanctuary. The field-marshal stationed himself at a *prie-dieu* placed in the centre of the aisle, whilst the remainder of the Church and Empire Procession filed off to the chairs reserved for them underneath the dome.

As the congregation sang—

Forward, flock of Jesus,
Salt of all the earth,
Till each yearning purpose
Spring to glorious birth;
Sick, they ask for healing,
Blind, they grope for day:
Pour upon the nations
Wisdom's loving ray.
Forward out of error,
Leave behind the night:
Forward through the darkness,
Forward into light!—

the chancel became illuminated. The audience perceived, not the high altar and its reredos, but, in a circle of bright light, seated on the top of the Holy Mountain—Alexander Trotman!

Then there were three cheers, thrice resounding.

The strains of the hymn changed abruptly to *God Save the King*.

Once the national anthem was played, twice it was played. It was begun again. Alec suddenly remembered his instructions. He stood erect on the Holy Mountain. He unfurled (with fumbling), and waved, the Union Jack.

Frantic enthusiasm possessed the audience. Hats, sticks, umbrellas, handkerchiefs, waved. Cheering and *God Save the King* arose one against the other—played vocal tug-o'-war.

But Alec—Alec was seen to totter, and to fall from top to bottom of the Holy Mountain. Those who had good places saw blood. Blood from the mouth.

The curtain was rung down amid the profoundest sensation

Some said it was a judgment.

Others jeered.

XII

The last, the most impressive, scene of the Church and Empire Ballet took place behind the curtain.

Alec was propped up in a fainting condition against that simulacrum of the Holy Mountain down which he had fallen. Ranged around him were the interior fittings of St. Paul's and the trees of the Garden of Aphrodite—all those properties, that is, which had not been optical delusions. On the outskirts of the group were the erstwhile courtesans and priests, craning their necks, pushing their painted faces forwards. The stage was brilliantly lighted. The audience could be heard departing from the theatre. A tone of wonderment was perceptible in the hubbub of their voices, through which the shouts of newsboys outside penetrated in gusts of noise.

Nearest Alec were Sir Pushcott Bingley, the *Halfpenny Press* man, the manager of the Neapolitan, two doctors and a call-boy. After examining his bared chest with stethoscopes, they gave him a piece of ice to suck and told him to keep quite quiet. The ice froze his teeth. He made a wry face and began to revive.

"What is it?" Sir Pushcott Bingley asked.

"Has he complained of indigestion?" said one of the doctors.

"Nothing at all the matter with him. . . ."

"He told me," said the *Halfpenny Press* man, "that he's had a stomach-ache, as he called it, almost ever since he's been in London. His mother wrote . . ."

"H'm!" the doctor remarked. "That's it—lungs fairly sound—gastric ulcer, no doubt."

"Will he be right by to-morrow night's performance?" the manager of the music-hall inquired.

"My dear sir, he won't be right for a week, or yet a month. Gastric ulcer requires perfect rest and careful nursing, the best—if the cure is to be radical."

"But we've got a week's contract . . ."

"Pardon me," Sir Pushcott interrupted.

"We've never had a better house than we had to-night. I'll give . . ."

"That cannot be helped. He must be taken to a hospital."

"Not to be thought of," said Sir Pushcott. "My house . . ."

"Or he ought to go home. Trowbury, isn't it?"

Alec attempted to speak. He even tried to get up, but was prevented by the doctor.

"Well, what is it my boy?"

"I want to go home to mother," he whispered. "I don't like London."

"So you shall when you are a little better."

"Now," supplicated the Mountain-Mover. "I *won't* stay!"

Then, being highly overwrought and too weak to struggle, he wept. The ice slipped out of his mouth. "I wish I'd never come. I wish I'd never gone near Ramshorn Hill." On their telling him to stay quiet, he made repeated efforts to roll over and get up, like an ungainly animal. His white face rocked from side to side.

"This must be stopped," said the doctor. "Can't we send for his people? He will bring on the hæmorrhage again."

Sir Pushcott Bingley did not appear to favour the idea of receiving at Park Lane the Famous Grocer and his elegant wife. After a minute's meditation, he asked: "Would it not be possible to send him down to Wiltshire in a motor ambulance? They run as smoothly as beds, don't they?"

"Well—yes—that *would* be possible. But who is to go with him?"

"Go yourself and take a nurse, or two nurses if you like. I'll see to it, you understand. He *must* recover, you know."

"Oh, I think he will do that. He seems to be of a rather scrofulous tendency. Heredity . . ."

"His father wrote to him and said they were going to make him Mayor of Trowbury," said the *Halfpenny Press* man.

"Poor boy!" said the doctor.

"You had better go too," said Sir Pushcott to the *Halfpenny Press* man. "I can manage. Let me know. No further need of me, I suppose? Good-night, then."

They awaited the ambulance and the nurse. The major lights of the music-hall went out, until the group formed an illuminated spot, a dark-shadowed picture, framed by darkness.

XIII

Thus did Alexander Trotman, after his triumph in London, return to his father's house and shop at Trowbury; lying on a swung spring-bed in a motor ambulance; watched by a doctor and a nurse; the victim of a shaky constitution and Sir Pushcott Bingley's table, of his father's youthful smartnesses and his own most moderate gluttony.

It was about eight o'clock in the morning when the ambulance drove down Castle Street and stopped at the Famous Grocery.

The *Halfpenny Press* man rang the bell. Mrs. Trotman peeped out of an upper window, discreetly in order not to show her slip-bodice. "What is it? Do you want Mr. Trotman? Have you come from the police. My husband won't be on the bench to-day."

On seeing it was not the police, she slipped on a dressing-gown, tucked her hair inside the collar and went down to the front door.

They told her that Alec had been taken ill; showed her son to her lying pale on the spring bed with a piece of ice in his mouth.

"Oh, Allie, Allie! What have they been doing to you?" she cried.

She ran inside calling, "James, James! Quick! Come here! She shouted to the servant to light a fire in Master Allie's bedroom, and, her voice breaking, ended in a screech.

Detaching the bed from its springs, they carried the Wonder-Worker up to his own bedroom. Mr. Trotman appeared, not very fresh-looking at that time of day. But his coolness and dignity did not desert him.

"You are a doctor, I presume, sir?" he said.

"Yes, I am."

"Sent by Sir Pushcott Bingley?"

"Yes."

"And how is Sir Pushcott?"

"Oh, doctor, doctor! what is it, please?" Mrs. Trotman exclaimed.

"Gastric ulcer—ulcerated stomach—hæmorrhage . . ."

"Oh, I'm *so* thankful it's not that dreadful appendicitis! Can he take bovril? Or would bread-and-milk be better?"

BOOK III

I

'ANTIENT hostelries' like the Blue Boar, in small towns like Trowbury, have many uses. First, of course, they are drinking-shops. Secondly, they are free clubs. Thirdly, they are informal places of appointment which seldom or never fail. If you have business with one of the leading tradesmen or minor professional men, you may go to his shop only to learn, probably, that he is out; gone to his brother's funeral, his aunt's wedding,

shooting, fishing, bathing, or somewhere whence he is expected every minute. But if you can recollect when he is accustomed to attend the Blue Boar bar, and look in at that hour, there you shall surely find him. Who can deny that business runs more sweetly to the tune of, "What's yours?—Good health!—The same to you, sir!"?

On the Wednesday morning, despite all that had happened, Mr. Trotman entered the swing-doors at precisely his usual time.

"Well, I never, Mr. Trotman! What ever *have* you been up to? You look. . . . There! He-He-he-he-he! Brandy and a small Schweppe: is that it?"

Mr. Trotman would not at once, however, look with Miss Sankey on the bright and bibulous side of things. He remained very serious indeed, and more faded in appearance than usual.

"I've had my son brought home very seriously ill."

"Dear me!" Miss Sankey's voice sank to a confidential whisper: "Dying, did you say?"

Mr. Trotman leaned over the counter. "The doctors hardly know. Two of them there. Ulcerated stomach. Yes—brandy-and-soda, please."

"Ah, I had that, you know, when I was a young girl, and doesn't it serve you out, my word! Poor boy!—Top o' the morning to you, Mr. Ganthorn! How's you? Eh? I say, have you heard? You tell him, Mr. Trotman. Dying! Fancy! After all he's done. . . . Moving mountains! Poor boy! And I know what it's like; that I do. When everybody was talking about him everywhere. . . . Struck down! Pride goes before a fall. Ay me! filling glasses and a joke and a laugh isn't the worst life in the world when all's said and done. Shan't I be glad when Christmas comes!"

It pleased Mr. Ganthorn to look quizzical. He turned from the sympathetic Miss Sankey. "Is this true about your son, Trotman? Heard this morning he was dying. Not so bad as that, is it?"

The Mayor looked sorrowful, as if he feared the tragic worst; as if so conspicuous an event might indeed happen to his family. He spoke in a deprecating manner: "I can't say. There's two doctors with him—Vere M'Lloyd and one Sir Pushcott sent down with the ambulance from London. Vere M'Lloyd tells my wife he's got hope, but it's pretty serious I'm afraid."

Mr. Ganthorn sipped and meditated a moment or two. The Mayor did the same, most impressively. Then the former said with a great affectation of nonchalance: "How about

what we were talking about the other day—what we arranged that night at my place, you know ? "

" Well, that's it. . . ."

" Come into the smoke-room. Drink up and have another. —Two more brandies and a split soda, please, Miss Cora, in the little smoking-room."

The two wiseacres retired to a very small rectangular room, the centre of which was occupied by a highly polished brass-bound table, spotted with black burns, and bearing water-jugs, match-stands and ash-trays, all with liquor advertisements upon them. At either end was an easy-chair. Ranged along the walls, as closely as possible, were other wooden chairs of the straight-backed variety, with small wooden arms and commodious horsehair seats—chairs for fat men too stiff to lounge. That cramped little room is the Holy of Holies of the Blue Bores. There, especially on Sunday evenings after church-time, they love to sit, to listen to their voices, and sometimes to see each other through the murky air.

Mr. Trotman secured the easy-chair under the window. To be near him, Mr. Ganthorn took the next straight-backed chair. They got up and closed the window, shutting out a scent of flowers. They settled down again. . . .

When Miss Sankey took in the drinks, she heard Mr. Ganthorn saying, " Well, you see, it's like this : if he can't be mayor after you, it's the liberals' turn, and one of their men will have to go in ; and as there'll probably be a general election pretty soon, it'll be as well to have a conservative mayor if we can. With a conservative mayor, conservative affairs go better. I don't mean to say the mayor influences the election, and yet he does, in *little* ways, you understand ; and it's the little ways that count when there's a fight for it."

As they strolled across the hall, on their way out of the hotel, Miss Sankey was able to overhear a little more.

" I hope it won't turn out so serious after all," Mr. Ganthorn was saying.

" We shall hear when Sir Pushcott's specialist gets down later in the day. If anybody can pull him through, Sir Pushcott Bingley's physician will. Very kind of him. . . ."

" Well, good-morning. About the other matter : I think *I* can work *that*."

II

There is happily no need to inquire how far the rapid improvement in Mr. Trotman's spirits was due to the Blue Boar bar, to his confabulation with Mr. Ganthorn, to the gentle exercise of trotting about Trowbury, or to all the pleasing things he saw and heard. At all events, the world assumed for him a gayer tint. Mild martyrdom *plus* pity is a subtle mixture, a moral absinthe. The certain knowledge that his only son—a young man just making such a mark—was dangerously ill, became glossed over by Mr. Trotman's being, as at the commencement of his mayoralty, a centre of public attention.

Such attention too!

There was the *Halfpenny Press* with its five million readers. A public of five thousand thousand had its compound eye upon the house of Trotman. It was a little nebulous, that; a cloud of witnesses too cloudy; but it made Mr. Trotman feel his own importance in the universe. And, to come nearer home, men and women whom he did not know (as civic head of Trowbury he considered himself acquainted with everybody worth knowing) asked him how his son did, and all about the illness, in a manner so kindly that he appropriated the kindliness for himself. All treated him as one overwhelmed by conquering grief. A commercial traveller, no particular friend of his, rather the reverse indeed, asked him to have a 'reviver.' Another man suggested a pick-me-up, and yet another was ready to broach a last dozen of the best tonic port in Trowbury's cellars. Already fortified, as aforesaid, Mr. Trotman withstood the temptations, and felt all the better for that too. The Rev. Mr. Marteene, a hot and outspoken opponent of grocers' licences, whom he happened to meet in the Market Square, asked if the invalid might be visited and suggested prayers for recovery in all the churches. He spoke so nicely, so religiously, that a starting tear made Mr. Trotman wink. What the stricken father said about the medical details of the case might have furnished forth a writer of patent medicine advertisements, from which in fact his knowledge of the pathology and therapeutics of the stomach was mainly derived. Moving the Holy Mountain, he quite agreed, might so have exhausted the poor boy's vital forces that his digestive organs—never, alas! very strong—fell an easy victim to disease.

Hitherto, he had regarded Alec's multifarious ailments as a sort of pastime indulged in by Mrs. Trotman. Now he was almost anxious to abdicate his place as head of the household;

willing to await permission to be taken to the sick-room, and to obey orders while there. It satisfied his conception of correct behaviour under such circumstances.

Alec lay flat with only one of Mrs. Trotman's best hemstitched pillows beneath his tired head. The tranquil sunshine of a late summer's afternoon made him look simply wan and peaceful, without accentuating the truly deplorable state of his always mediocre complexion. His weakness could be judged by the way his eyes, without movement of the head, followed the zigzag flight of a bee which buzzed up and down the window until it found an opening (strongly opposed by Mrs. Trotman as likely to give the boy his death of cold, but insisted on by the nurse), and flew out.

The medicated odour of the room at once put Mr. Trotman in the frame of mind for visitation of the sick. Probably for the first time since Alec's babyhood, he was prepared to treat his offspring with respect. It brought a sense of pathos, even to him, to look down at this young man who had been reared with so much difficulty and now was struck down by little ulcers at the most, the only, brilliant period of his life.

Alec, in reality however, was happier and more comfortable than he had been for some time. Illness, to which his mother had accustomed him, was much less worrying than the Modern Miracle; than Sir Pushcott Bingley, London, the *Halfpenny Press*, and all the complications that had arisen out of them. Now he was at rest. Sufficient for the day was the kindness and pain thereof. Being ill, he was content to wait patiently on the future. If the divine, the comfortable, Julia floated into his weary mind, she came accompanied by no call to immediate action.

Mr. Trotman advanced to the bedside on tip-toe.

"Well, my boy, how is it now?"

Alec smiled dimly. "All right."

"You must hurry up and get better. We are going to make you mayor, perhaps."

"——"

"You'll soon be well. Sir Pushcott's own consulting physician'll soon put you right. We must write and thank Sir Pushcott."

Alec remained silent, inert, pitiful.

Other proper things to say slipped Mr. Trotman's mind. One cannot bully a son into conversation and filial respect when he is incontestably very ill; not, that is, if the son is surrounded by protectors in the shapes of doctors, nurses, and a mother.

Mr. Trotman had never practised kind cajolery with his son. He didn't know how. So he retired helpless.

The *Halfpenny Press*, which Mr. Trotman did not fail to purchase, excited itself to great eloquence in its best best style. The Church and Empire Ballet was described vividly and without impropriety ; the public consternation ; the scene behind the scenes, which reminded the *Halfpenny Press* of nothing so much as Nelson dying in the cockpit of the *Victory ;* the journey of the motor ambulance with its acetylene lamps and 'the fraughted souls within her,' across the dark country to the Mountain-Mover's beloved native town ; and finally the pathetic reception by alarmed awakened parents. The journey was said to be a striking instance of the modern coalition between the mechanic and the medical sciences. The latest resources of civilisation were ready and willing to lend their aid to the resuscitator of the Age of Miracles. Readers were referred to another page, to an article by a high authority on motor ambulances. All England, said the morning's leader, all the Empire, half the world, would be watching around the bed of sickness at Trowbury with anxiety, and with prayer to the Almighty Dispenser of health and disease. In fine—to strip away much verbiage—the young man, recognising that he had performed the miracle of the twentieth century only by kind permission of Almighty God, did desire, as a thank-offering, that the Church should receive the earthly benefits of what he had accomplished. But how ? There were obstacles unconquerable except by united national action. . . .

Mr. Trotman could not refrain from ejaculating : " Did he ? by Jove ! "

The *Evening Press*, in addition to a mincemeat of the morning's news, contained a bulletin (copyright) of the sufferer's progress, or non-progress ; a diagrammatic analysis of the motor ambulance's speed ; a popular article on the stomach with six reasons for the increase in dyspepsia ; and a photograph of the stricken mother which Mrs. Trotman declared to be an old one, totally unlike, an impudence and a libel.—But how nice of them to put it there ! How enterprising of Sir Pushcott !

The *Evening Press* also mentioned casually a suggestion 'emanating from an exalted quarter,' that the Holy Mountain might, through the agency of the Church, be used as a religious centre, to tighten the Christian bonds of Empire.

And the gist of Mr. Trotman's meditations on all this amounted to, " Where do *I* come in ? "

At the Blue Boar in the early evening he succeeded in drawing

into conversation a solicitor who, though of course a professional man while he was trade, condescended sometimes to take a glass with him. To the solicitor as a man of the world he outlined the events of the past fortnight in the shadowy secretive manner of conferring an illicit favour, in the guise of a man-to-man confidence made to a solicitor whose personal opinion was valuable but whose professional opinion was in nowise explicitly asked. In return for such touching confidence, Mr. Trotman was informed that *if* such and such a thing were *so*, and *if* other things were *otherwise*, the common-sense, and the legal, conclusion could only be *this ;* but *if* sundry things had been *thus*, then the result at law would be *that.* What Mr. Trotman could not determine was whether such and such things were *so*, other things *otherwise*, and sundry things *thus.* The *ifs* tormented him ; the solicitor's bill when it came in at the end of the year made him bounce :

To Conversation with Yourself at the Blue Boar Hotel, and Advice, say, Ten shillings and sixpense. 10/6.

Mr. Trotman said that all lawyers were rogues and scoundrels who made fortunes by transacting affairs the greater part of which any good business man (like himself) could do as well or better.

III

Next day, Sir Pushcott Bingley's consulting physician arrived in Trowbury. Mr. Trotman had a fleeting notion that the Mayor and Corporation ought to meet him at the station. Mrs. Trotman nearly fluttered her heart out with proud trepidation, and became faint with suspense. The three doctors mauled the patient ; poked, prodded and tapped him ; questioned the nurse in slow nonchalant tones ; and then they went to the drawing-room where Mrs. Trotman, in her bazaar-opening, prize-giving dress, was awaiting them.

" Do you think, Dr. Blenkhowe . ." the stricken mother began.

" Quite satisfactory, quite satisfactory, Mrs.—ah—Trotman," said the great physician. " It appears to me that the diagnosis of Dr. Garth and Dr. M'Lloyd is quite correct in every respect —absolutely."

He made a hearty meal off the highly deleterious refreshments (see *Traditional Diet*, by J. B. Y. Blenkhowe, M.D., &c. &c.) provided by Mrs. Trotman, and talked to the other two doctors about the celebrated air of Trowbury and the desirability of polluting the Downs with a sanatorium for tuberculous ladies.

Mrs. Trotman did think that he might have said more about Alexander's stomach.

When he was on the point of going, however, Dr. Blenkhowe addressed Mrs. Trotman once more. "It appears to me, Mrs. —ah—Trotman," he said, "that the treatment of Dr. M'Lloyd and Dr. Garth leaves nothing to be desired—nothing."

In the world's eye, Alexander Trotman's stomach slowly healed; and Dr. Blenkhowe, by means of his success in this case, so thoroughly advertised in the *Halfpenny Press*, was enabled to give up his practice, to devote himself exclusively to the stomach-aches of a few extraordinarily wealthy patients, and to write works of great popularity but doubtful literary merit.

Mr. Trotman, no longer young, was moved by his son's danger to meditate sometimes on death. With men of his practical stamp, to think on death is to fear it. The idea of profit and loss he could not dissociate from it. The advantages of investment in virtue, bearing interest beyond the grave, appealed to him. He felt, too, that it would be nice to do good, as he phrased it to himself. He made up his mind to do something good, and very naturally chose his son as a convenient object on which to practise good intentions. He would not himself have been allowed to tend Alec. The arrangement was that the professional nurse watched him through the night and his mother during the day. Mrs. Trotman, therefore, could obtain no outdoor exercise. So, when Alec no longer required quite such skilled and constant attention, Mr. Trotman announced that he would sit in the room while his wife and the nurse took a constitutional together. After some opposition, he got his way. He lighted a mild cigar, hoped Alec did not mind the smoke, and stationed himself beside the bed.

Father and son—pretty picture!

Whilst the blue smoke from Mr. Trotman's cigar-end and the white smoke from his mouth curled fantastically about in the still, sunshiny air of the room, he tried to begin a pleasant chat with his son. But Alec did not want to talk to his father any more than before. Neither Sir Pushcott Bingley's town mansion and the appurtenances thereof, nor the future and the money to be made out of it, could lure him into intelligent conversation. He answered direct questions briefly and aloofly; that was all And Mr. Trotman had anticipated a nice little talk, a little sympathy from his son for his own virtuous feelings. How hard it is to commence virtue!

Later in the day, as soon as he was released indeed, Mr.

Trotman mentioned the matter to Miss Sankey. "The boy's got no spirits at all; no enterprise, no go. I can't think where he gets it from. Not from me. In twenty-five years I've built up the business with the largest turnover in Trowbury, except this place perhaps. He's been too much at his mother's apron-strings, but she *will* have it. Delicate. . . . One of her brothers is a fair waster!"

"He never comes in here," remarked Miss Sankey, as if to join the ranks of the Blue Bores was to show oneself decisively a man of enterprise.

"No," Mr. Trotman replied gravely. "My son does not frequent public bars."

"Ah!" said Miss Sankey with her mouth full. "'Tisn't always the most artful that's the most happy. Have a chocolate? A nice young man of mine gave me a whole two-pound box this morning, and I didn't fish for them either like I did when you didn't give me any after all. *He* said I had a cheery voice. Go on! take a handful."

For the second time that day Mr. Trotman felt himself rebuffed; confined within the measure of other people's stupidity.

Sick people are commonly supposed to lie by, to think of their sins and to repent. The testimony of observers unbiased by grief indicates rather that in the majority of cases an invalid does no such thing, because weakness brings procrastination in its train, and death steals away the power of thought before it is aware of its own decline. Nevertheless, it does more frequently happen that young people, recovering slowly from an illness, collect themselves together, as it were. They break through their former easy subjection to the wills of others. They take into their hands the tillers of their own boats, and by skill, not strength, they steer them. In their weakness they are more decisive than in their power. Knowing at last what they want, they take steps to get it.

So with Alec. Up to the time of his illness he drifted merely; a piece of flotsam on the currents stirred up by his neighbours. He was a grown-up schoolboy whose attempt to write an article showed the aimless befuddlement of his wits; a fool. Now, while his mother watched over him, trembling for his weakness, he developed, by a sort of inward communion, a dull apprehension of the aimlessness of his life, of the lack in it of any definite hopes, and also sufficient initiative to bend his mother to his newly aroused will. He became a man; not much of a man; but a man that's a man for a' that.

He determined to see his Julia.

One morning, therefore, while his mother was fussing about the room, he said: "I want to see Julia Jepp."

"Who? Julia Jepp. . . ."

"Miss Jepp at Clinch's."

"You must lie quiet and get better, my dear," said his mother, with some asperity in her voice.

Alec bothered no more about it then, but next morning he asked simply: "When's Miss Jepp coming?"

"Alec! Your father would never give his consent."

"Then don't ask him."

Again the subject dropped, and again Mrs. Trotman did nothing but decide inwardly that it was absurd and out of the question—naughty of Alec. It happened, however, that Dr. Vere M'Lloyd, concluding the ulcers healed, put Alec on a less restricted diet—a little sole, a little *good* wine (he knew what the Mayor's wines were like), and a little custard. Alec was told, moreover, to brighten up. He was to have some unfatiguing diversion and enjoy himself. Games, some reading, visitors. . . .

"I should like to have some visitors," said the patient.

"So you shall, my boy, by all means. Let him see people he likes to see, Mrs. Trotman, if it doesn't fatigue him or excite him too much."

While the doctor was being shown downstairs with the usual ceremony, he remarked: "Everything to brighten him up, Mrs. Trotman. He seems as if he wants more object in life. With care, he ought now to make a steady recovery; but, you understand, there must be no relapse."

"But . . ."

"Let him do anything he wants to, in reason. Good-morning, Mrs. Trotman. Beautiful day."

On returning to the sick-room Mrs. Trotman found her son visibly brighter.

"Now you'll send for Miss Jepp. I want to see her more than anybody else."

"Your father . . ."

"Haven't *you* ever done anything when father was out?"

Mrs. Trotman escaped. But when she next appeared, bearing food, Alec asked, "Well? Have you done it? You say you want to make me better, and you don't do what the doctor says."

"All right, dear. I'll send. Only I hope your father won't get to know."

"Never mind him! Do it first and see what he says after-

wards. He can't kill you for it, and he won't kill me 'cause I'm profitable."

"But he'll talk."

"So he will anyhow."

Mrs. Trotman was relieved—almost jubilant—when she was able to tell her son: "I've sent round to Clinch's for Miss Jepp, and she says she can't come."

"Give me some paper and an envelope and a pencil, please."

He thereupon wrote with all a lover's artfulness:

"DEAR JULIA,—

"You aren't going to chuck me now I'm ill, are you?

"Your affectionate Friend,

"ALEXANDER TROTMAN."

"Send that," said the invalid. "That'll fetch her."

Mrs. Trotman couldn't see the writing through the envelope. She sent the note at once.

IV

It was not till next morning that Alec received a small pink strongly scented envelope sealed with a dab of bright blue wax. Inside it he found: "Early closing. Coming half-past two. Haste. J. J."

And just after half-past two, Alec, whose ears had become preternaturally sharp, heard double footsteps coming up the stairs. He raised himself slightly in bed, smoothed the coverlet, touched the bedclothes round him. His mother was talking very fast. "Yes, he's better now, thank God; but we didn't know what would happen at first, or for some days." People of the Trotman stamp mention God to their foes in order that God may appear to be on their side.

As the last rays of sunset glide into a room, seeming to warm it and to fill it with a half-earthly radiance, so did the yellow girl from Clinch's rustle into the sick-room in the wake of Mrs. Trotman, and warm it and brighten it for Alec. "He's looking better now, not quite so pale," Mrs. Trotman was saying nervously, "and the doctor has ordered him a little fish."

She fiddled with the blind. "It's a little glaring, this room, but very cheerful, is it not?"

"Mother," said Alec. "Hadn't you better go and see where father is?"

Mrs. Trotman stopped like a talking-machine run down. With a glance behind her, she went.

"Julie . . ."

"Sh! you must keep quiet, or I shall have to go."

"They're always saying 'Sh!' Tell me some news. How've you been getting on?"

"Oh, *I'm* all right."

"Well, everybody? How's Miss Starkey. *She* wasn't up to much, was she?"

"Miss Starkey is out at nurse's—Mrs. Parfitt's. I think she's better, but . . . I generally go out to tea with her on Sunday. Only it won't do to let people know I'm chummy with her still. You see . . . Now, keep quiet. You mustn't get excited, or else you'll be bad again, like you were in London. Miss Starkey's all right."

"D'you know, Julie," said Alec in an uncommonly grown-up manner for him, "I've almost forgotten about London lying here. It's like a sort of dream, and I often say to myself, 'Did I really go to London?' and all that. Have you been to see where Ramshorn Hill went from? My father says they ought to start a quarry company there. Julie, do you remember what we said up there?" Alec craned forward on his pillow.

"I was so frightened. Don't let's talk about it."

"But you remember what nurse said?"

Julie began chattering unintelligibly to gain time. Alec raised himself in bed, hanging on her mixed-up words as an innocent man, almost talked into guiltiness by the prosecution, hangs on the foreman of the jury's. He plucked at the sheet —a pitiful object of weakness and suppressed excitement.

Julia tried to calm him. But he besought her: "You do remember, don't you? You *must* remember, Julie?"

"Sh, sh! You mustn't, Alec. You'll make yourself ill."

"There! you called me 'Alec.' Do it again. We *will* be engaged, won't we, Julie?"

"No, no! I didn't mean that."

"But you did! We were. Nurse thought we were."

"You *must* keep quiet, Mr. Trotman."

"Why's everybody against me? They always sit on me —everybody! They always have. And now you're doing it too."

"You mustn't take it that way. You're going to be rich and not have to work, and have motor-cars. Think of poor Edie Starkey with nobody belonging to her. I'm almost keeping her, but you mustn't tell anybody, because . . . Well, I don't want it to be known."

"I don't care about Edie Starkey. I don't want to get

better—not if we're not going to be engaged. Julie, I've got better for you. I've thought about it here . . ."

"No! I can't ever marry you. I really can't. But I'll be friends. We will be friends, won't we?"

This was exceedingly commonplace; almost fictional if it had been done more stylishly. But there were harried and suppressed emotions beneath it all. Miss Julia Jepp was touching that part of life not to be found in a country Emporium except through the medium of fiction. Therefore, searched and worried to her inmost being, she talked about continuing friends with Alec. The lovely Lady Verbena Gwalter talked so, at first, to the noble navvy, in *Love's High Jump*.

Alec, unlike that genteel and herculean navvy, cried out, 'Julie!" in a tone of despair that Julie did not soon forget. And he showed signs of fainting.

In fact, he did faint for a minute or two.

Then was Miss Jepp in a situation familiar to her, and at her best. She rushed to the washhandstand, wrung out the towel in cold water and applied it to Alec's forehead. She opened the windows wide; searched the mantelpiece, found a bottle of Eau de Cologne, and sprinkled it over a handkerchief, which she substituted for the wet towel. Tipping out some more of the scent upon her own handkerchief, a folded delicate thing for visiting, she placed it to his nose. On his remaining inert, she took fright and rang the bell.

Whereupon he revived.

Mrs. Trotman, appearing, found her son's face half hidden under handkerchiefs, and the room pungent with Eau de Cologne.

"What have you done?" she demanded.

"He was a bit faint."

"And look at the windows!"

"I let some fresh air in. Give him a little brandy."

"No. The doctor hasn't said . . ."

"Yes. Just a little. Where is it?"

Like rapier-play went the words:

"He's my son!"

"He's my young man!"

"No, he isn't!"

"Yes, he is!"

"You'd better go!"

"I shan't!"

"You shall!"

"I will!"

"What's this?" asked Mr. Trotman, who had just come

up, in his sepulchral tones. "Miss Jepp! Why's she here. I won't . . ."

"Be quiet, father," said Alec from the bed.

And, strange to say, Mr. Trotman obeyed his son.

"Good-bye, so long, Julie."

"Good-bye."

"Will you?"

"We'll see."

Julia was left to find her own way downstairs and out of the house. She was hot for vengeance. So, too, were the Mayor and Mayoress. Their faces all showed it—faces incongruous in the midst of the workaday world. But it is to be recollected that the affair was both serious and heart-moving to the comical people concerned in it.

V

Alec recovered rapidly from the excitement of Miss Jepp's visit, which indeed woke him up a little from his state of coddled apathy and in so doing hastened his mending. Mr. and Mrs. Trotman recovered less quickly, under the compulsion of events, so to speak. They—Mrs. Trotman especially—would have liked to get Julia Jepp dismissed from the Emporium, much as Miss Starkey had been flung out of the Famous Grocery Establishment. That, however, could not be done, since she was valuable to the Emporium, in that her taste (in other people's dress) attracted the custom of ladies from the country as well as of tradesmen's wives and faithful aspiring gullible servant girls. She gave the place a tone, and with that a profit which Mr. Clinch's expensive gross habits could ill have done without. And Mrs. Clinch, she was fond of her.

Therefore she stayed; though had the Blue Bores known that an unfortunate girl in trouble was mainly supported by her charity, out of her earnings and savings, they would have felt it necessary, for the sake of respectability, to procure her discharge, and would have spent many hours deeply regretting such a scandal.

Other matters, too, drew off Mr. and Mrs. Trotman's angei. The Mayor had an appointment with the vicar to discuss a reconstruction of the Coal and Blanket Club, of which Mrs. Trotman was *ex-officio* president. The vicar was of opinion that too large a proportion of the funds had been applied towards the committee's bazaar expenses, and also that some starving

families had been receiving the club's warmth without deserving it as much, for instance, as the vicar might have, had he been destitute. He spoke his mind, and as a small attention after doing so, he gave Mr. Trotman a marked copy of that week's *Anglican Churchman* with which Mr. Trotman straightway hastened home to his son.

"What do you think of this, my boy, from the *Anglican Churchman*?" said the happy father:

"We hear, on good authority, that the Church is likely to reap at least some advantage from the miraculous removal of Ramshorn Hill from the neighbourhood of Trowbury, in Wiltshire, to that of the metropolitan suburb of Acton. Nothing could be more appropriate, or more in accordance with Divine Command. By the Church it was moved. To the Church (D.V.) it will come. For we need not to remind our readers that Mr. Alexander Trotman is a convinced and active, though not a communicating, Anglican. We trust, however, that the terms of the gift—if gift it is to be—will be clearly laid down at the outset. The Church has had enough of half-measures, has suffered enough at the hands of non-sectarians and infidels. *How long, O Lord, how long!* Divine service demands free gifts. We can have nothing to do with undenominational religion. We have no doubt but our dissenting friends would be ready to help us and to make the so-called Holy Mountain a conspicuous centre of propaganda directed against the righteous union of Church and State. *Verbum sat sapienti!*"

"That sounds as if we shan't have much to do with it. . . ."

"Oh," said Alec.

"But Sir Pushcott'll give 'em what for."

"Yes."

Mrs. Trotman entered the sick-room with a telegram in her hand. "Sir Pushcott Bingley's coming down to-morrow! We simply can't ask him to stay here.—D'you hear, Alec, Sir Pushcott's coming!"

"Let 'em all come," replied the invalid wearily.

On looking into the *Halfpenny Press* next day Mr. Trotman was astonished to find that a newspaper which had tried often to scare the nation with articles on the alcoholic degeneration of the British imperial race, had now displaced the gracious doings of the Royal Family, the little war in the Himalayas, the Anglo-Zulu crisis and even the Holy Mountain, by several columns in support of the falling conservative ministry—by a leading article on premature temperance legislation and the sacred British right of individual liberty.

"Good again!" remarked Mr. Trotman, thinking of his grocer's licence.

Then he recollected that there was no knowing if the family of Trotman would need to be in trade much longer. A country house appeared to his mind's eye—coverts, motor-cars, obsequious villagers, himself a sportsman, a seat in parliament, a title, Sir James Trotman, Lord Trowbury. . . .

For James Trotman had his day-dreams as well as his liver-nightmares.

VI

"Sir Pushcott's coming!" What excitement in the Famous Grocery Establishment! Mrs. Trotman very nearly forgot for a moment her son's internal arrangements.

Sir Pushcott Bingley was exceedingly sorry not to be able to accept Mrs. Trotman's kind hospitality. She would understand, would she not? It was—ah—necessary for him to be near his motor, which was in the Blue Boar garage. A new chauffeur. . . . A public life had to be lived in public places. He had, in fact, ordered dinner at the Blue Boar by telegram. But if Mrs. Trotman would allow him, he would look in after dinner. . . .

Charming man!

"He might have asked you to dinner with him at the Blue Boar," said Mrs. Trotman to her husband, nevertheless.

"Public men like to be by themselves sometimes. Perhaps he'll dictate to his secretary while he's at dinner," replied 'Mendment Trotman, for the sake of amending what he otherwise completely agreed with.

Sir Pushcott Bingley was forgiven after supper. He was jubilant, merry, jolly; most condescending. He told them exalted secrets.

"The curse of the British Empire," he said, holding up to the light a glass of the Famous Grocer's port wine and replacing it on the table somewhat decidedly, "is, as you say, a lack of enterprise—an inability to take the tide at the flood. I am sorry Alexander is not well enough to join our conclave: you must inform him gradually, Mrs. Trotman, as his strength warrants. But you must please understand fully that what I am saying must not leak out—not a word ('Not a word!' echoed Mr. Trotman)—or all our efforts will be quite fruitless, and instead of making money, we shall certainly lose it."

"D'you hear, Lilian," said Mr. Trotman.

"You'd better listen to Sir Pushcott too," retorted Mrs. Trotman with a touch of acerbity.

"I am sure I can trust you to preserve our interests—your own interests—your own interests," was Sir Pushcott's brilliantly tactful stroke.

After journalistic strife in London he liked to have these provincial fools, as he thought them, hanging on speeches of his. Possibly to let rip, more than it usually behoved him to do in London, made him feel the equal of the extremely clever writers (in their own way) that he employed.

"Well," he went on, "as I was saying, the Gods fought for us. I should never have been able to obtain the lease of the Holy Mountain if the situation, political and religious, had not been what it is. You see, the conservative government will have to go to the country very shortly, and if I were to print everything I could print, it's fairly certain that they would not return to power for a year or two. The election will really turn on the temperance question, and there is nothing like temperance unless it's education for pandering to the desire of every virtuous man and every busybody to be his brother's keeper. To clap your opponent into legal fetters is one of the easiest and pleasantest ways of doing good—much easier and pleasanter than loving your neighbour as yourself and less costly than sending out missionaries to savages who don't want them. Missions, as you know, are mainly kept up by old ladies who, if they saw Mary Magdalene coming, would fly into the next street and then send a policeman after her to find out whether she had come by her alabaster box of precious ointment honestly. Forcing Christianity on niggers and education on the poor are two of the easiest ways of running up one's credit account in heaven; and besides, as it makes both of them more profitable, it also runs up one's credit account on earth. Temperance legislation, however, is the best dodge of all. The reformer who gets drunk every evening of his life, but makes a point, for his liver's sake, of drinking nothing but salts in the morning, always wishes to close the public-houses till midday."

"We certainly ought to be more temperate, as a nation," Mr. Trotman remarked.

"Precisely," said Sir Pushcott. "Who disputes it? But I have given you the main reason why so-called temperance reform is a practicable plank in the liberal platform, and seduces so many conservatives from the broad lines of party action. The *Halfpenny Press* has always advocated retrenchment and reform on imperial lines; efficiency, regeneration, and all that;

together with a modicum of temperance—a good deal of it, in fact, lately ;—for it would never have done for the opinion of the country to leave the *Halfpenny Press* behind. We have to go with it ; and we find that a little temperance has a distinctly beneficial effect on our circulation.

" One of the cabinet ministers said to me a short time ago : ' You know, Bingley, the conservative party will go to the dogs if this teetotal foolery can't be stopped, and the electorate roused up to value its damn liberties.'

" Well, the government are of opinion that if once the average man can be given a sense of his inalienable right to get drunk if he wants to, and be made to see what these pin-prick temperance tactics are bound to end in, then he will rouse up and completely overwhelm the reformers, and the liberal-labour party with them. It is the conservatives' last chance ; they've run up taxation so ; and I promised we'd help them if they would lease the Holy Mountain, which is Crown land, to your son—to us, that is. Of course they demurred ; said the liberals would scent jobbery and make party capital out of it. So I pointed out that our unequivocal support was their last chance of staying in office, and that the wind might easily be taken out of the liberal sails by our undertaking to sublet the Mountain to the Church for religious purposes. Also we—your son and myself, that is—offered to bear the brunt of any legal proceedings instituted by the Acton landlords whose property has been obliterated by the hill. In point of fact, they are men in a smallish way, for the hill luckily fell clear of the Goldsmiths' Company's estate ; and they have not enough money to guarantee their legal costs, let alone bring their cases to a successful conclusion. Capital is the tenth point of the law."

" But," asked Mrs. Trotman, who came of dissenting stock, though she was usually ashamed to say so, " why should the Church have it all ? The Church is not the only religion."

" Yes ? " added her husband.

" There are two very excellent practical reasons. The Church is the official State religion. Again, you'll find that the Church will be compelled to let other sects participate, and it is always best to let the sectarians fight out their own battles. And lastly, I am not so sure that the Church will be very greatly the gainer, for we shall not sublet the Holy Mountain to them for nothing, and in these days of fierce religious competition they can no doubt be made to bid pretty high if they are deftly managed. In any case, the Holy Mountain

will be leased to your son at a nominal rent for twenty-one years on the understanding that he sublets it to the Church—for how long not stated. As expressed in our agreement, I shall provide the capital. We stand to make money, I think."

"Much?" Mr. Trotman asked.

"Impossible to say exactly how much at the present moment. If we can keep the Acton landowners quiet and prevent them from forming a syndicate, as I think we shall . . . I daresay you saw this morning that the *Halfpenny Press* has taken up its new policy. We are no longer Social Reformers, as they call themselves, but Benevolent Individualists—let 'em reform themselves and devil take the hindmost! As he always has done!"

"But I wonder you aren't ashamed to be—like a turncoat," said Mrs. Trotman, who was still smarting from some of the baronet's remarks, notably those on missions and charitable ladies, both of which entered considerably into her schemes for social success. "People," she added, using an underbred woman's favourite indefinitely definite noun, "are generally ashamed of being inconsistent."

"Of being detected," replied Sir Pushcott Bingley. "Besides, Mrs. Trotman, it is not within the province of the press to be ashamed."

"How clever you are, Sir Pushcott!"

"What d'you think the Church will do?" inquired Mr. Trotman.

"I really don't know. And what does it matter? Talk, I suppose. What the Church misses is its ancient power of excommunication. Nobody takes any notice of its thunders nowadays. It is like an old lady whose complaints are received with the forbearance due to her senility, and whose charities have come to be regarded as rights. Even its power of social ostracism has passed to those who make more vigorous use of it—the nonconformists, I mean. They are our modern priestcraftsmen, even though their priests may be merely retired tradesmen, made into preachers in order to flatter their money out of them and to keep them faithful when social considerations would naturally urge them towards the Church."

"But that is very serious, very," remarked Mr. Trotman.

"Oh no! not at all, when you know how to take advantage of it. Let church and chapel exhaust their ammunition on one another; not on us. The Archbishop of All the Empire, whose creation it was *I* who brought about, is the only man to be feared; but even he is more or less helpless to do much but talk,

because his consecration is unpopular among the old-fashioned church-people who, after all, hold the ecclesiastical purse-strings."

The Director of the *Halfpenny Press* did not know, of course, that the revered, respected and feared parent had been an eloquent deacon of the straitest sect of nonconformists; had frightened one anæmic girl into religious mania and had laid several foundation-stones.

"Look at this, sir," said Mr. Trotman, producing his copy of the *Anglican Churchman.*

Sir Pushcott glanced down it. "Yes. Very good. It was arranged for by me. You see, they are already beginning to look the gift-horse in the mouth, and to lay down conditions of acceptance which no one will stop to listen to. Excellent people—fatuous, no doubt. If they only knew how they play into other people's hands. . . . They don't possess the diplomacy of cockroaches, which at least lie hidden till their hosts are gone off to bed."

"We have a lot of cockroaches in the kitchen," said Mrs. Trotman. "I believe they come from the shop."

"Nonsense!" said her husband. He roused himself in his chair, tapped the ash off his cigar, and, with a great semblance of import, in his most sepulchral voice, spoke thus:

"We have been diplomatic here too."

Then he watched for an effect.

"We are going to make him Mayor of Trowbury if he's well enough."

"Excellent!"

"There's rather a deadlock at present. We have a conservative and a liberal mayor turn and turn about, but it's the liberals' turn next and they have nobody that wants to take office and they don't want a conservative to have it. So me and Mr. Ganthorn, a great friend of mine, have dropped a word here and a word there, you understand. . . ."

"Perfectly."

"And it's about settled that my son is to be next mayor. You see, he hasn't got any politics, except mine; always tories, my family; and he hasn't helped the party like I have. It's thought that a well-known mayor may bring well-to-do residents to the town. The present member, Delaine Jenkyns, you know, told me that I had more to do with his getting in than any other man."

"He told Mr. Clinch that, too," Mrs. Trotman interrupted.

"No, he didn't!"

"Yes, he did! You *know* he did. You said if he did it again you'd vote liberal."

"Well," said Sir Pushcott, with the intention of being tactful, "these country mayors are of considerable importance in their own parish. It may help us . . ."

"My husband is mayor now," said Mrs. Trotman severely.

"Oh! I congratulate you. I had forgotten that, of course. Father and son! Excellent. A very responsible mayor he makes, I have no doubt, Mrs. Trotman. The duties are onerous, I believe. I must say *Good-night.* Son following his father—a family title. I have to thank you for your kind hospitality, Mrs. Trotman. Most kind. Tell your son he must hurry up and get quite well. I'll call in and see him to-morrow, if I may. Good-night."

With most gracious handshakes, Sir Pushcott Bingley took his leave.

But was he such a charming man after all? Had it not been for her beloved son's interests, Mrs. Trotman would have unsheathed her claws. "He must be an atheist," she said savagely; and then, having thrown some of the most sticky smelly mud at her disposal, she felt better.

In point of fact, it was by no means sure that the council would make Alec the next Mayor of Trowbury. His father had, during his year of office, become less popular with the governing cliques. He was suspected of having made a profit out of his mayoral salary, when by all right and precedent the town should have made a profit out of him.

Within two days, however, the matter was settled by the *Halfpenny Press*, in which there appeared a column headed:

ALEX. TROTMAN MAYOR OF TROWBURY

PROPHET HONOURED IN HIS OWN COUNTRY

SON TO SUCCEED FATHER IN MAYORAL CHAIR

Trowbury, having tasted notoriety, craved for more. The election was settled in advance at the Blue Boar, and the world's perusal clinched it.

VII

Sir Pushcott Bingley's visit to the sick-room lasted but a short time. Alec was difficult; he would not follow the conversational lead of the Director of the *Halfpenny Press.* He became impatient: wanted to know when the Holy Mountain was going

to bring in some money—enough to live on, say, in a little house ;—asked why it could not be sold as it stood. For he did not yet understand in the least the financial and diplomatic part of the business.

When Sir Pushcott, anxious to avoid long explanations, counselled patience, and inquired if Alec was engaged, Mrs. Trotman said that her son was not strong enough to talk business, and hurried the baronet from the room. Suffering brains, she declared, ought not to be worried. Had Sir Pushcott, for all his journalistic genius, known how to deal on an equality and individually with women like Mrs. Trotman, he would have retorted that the stomach isn't the brain. Instead, he was polite and nonplussed. In a short time his motor-car was bearing him over the Downs towards London.

Trowbury was outwardly calm. Although the *Halfpenny Press* informed it daily of the Holy Mountain, Parliament, the invalid's progress, temperance and its bearing on the sacred right of liberty, the revival of the State Church (to be brought to a glorious fulness by means of the said Holy Mountain) ; although there was the usual crop of murders, divorces, disasters, and diseases ; although all this hotch-potch was served up daily with a *sauce piquante* of mighty headlines,—Trowburians remained their old inert selves. They read, marked, and fell to at their parish pump. Drains took precedence over the Holy Mountain, a dog-fight over the parliamentary debate. Who can say they were not wise in their generation ? Mr. Trotman alone said wonderful things over his glasses at the Blue Boar, desiring to make as much capital and to gain as much attention as possible out of the events that had befallen his family, without at the same time making public any matter that had, in the interests of both, to be kept private between the Director of the *Halfpenny Press* and the Famous Mayor and Grocer of Trowbury. He pointed out daily to his wife how much depended on her secrecy. It was perhaps lucky that, in attaining the rank and deportment of mayoress, she had offended her few lady friends, and therefore, poor woman ! had no one, except the servant, to whom she could impart any secrets at all. In her husband's phrase, Mum *was* the word.

The sultry days of August were unfavourable to Alec's recovery. He developed an excitableness difficult to control, and a bad habit of nearly fainting when his will was crossed. He was like the small child who says cynically, " If you don't give in to me, I shall scream." Debility, the doctor called it, and once more prescribed entertainment.

Sir Pushcott's private secretary wrote, in answer to Mr. Trotman, that the Director of the *Halfpenny Press* was very busy, and that everything of importance he had to communicate would be found in the columns of the *Halfpenny Press*, a copy of which would be delivered daily at Mr. Trotman's establishment.

Deprived thus of his morning progress to and from the newspaper shop, Mr. Trotman took to reading the paper in his son's room. "Sir Pushcott is a very clever man," he remarked one day, "I don't quite see through his little game, but you ought to be proud to know him, my boy." In love with strategy, he proposed chess, but at that Alec was his master and twice fool's-mated him.

The conservative government, on its last legs before the onslaught of the temperance reformers, and much harassed within its ranks by the uncompromising stubbornness of the brewing interest, was only too glad to give forth the new cry of *Individual Liberty!* They acted faithfully by Sir Pushcott Bingley. They hardly dared do otherwise. The Holy Mountain was debated; the closure ruthlessly enforced. The Church, they said, had lacked encouragement to show what it could do. The Holy Mountain—Crown land, that is national land—ought not to remain untenanted and useless, a standing disgrace to that sense of economy and efficiency that it was the duty of the Conservative party to foster. The sacred cause of religion. . . . The diminution of piety among the working classes. . . . After all, the nation owed a miracle, and London a mountain—a hill—an eminence—only to, and to no other than, Alexander Trotman. Who so fit as he to be rewarded, always with our regard to national interests? His Majesty's Government counted on the support of all right-thinking men in the act of elementary justice. . . .

A Liberal leader, an enthusiast on the subjects of social reform, small holdings and Back to the Land, declared eloquently that it would be a standing disgrace to the nation if such land, miraculously placed almost in the heart of London, were not used to produce a pure milk-supply for ailing slum-babies. Amid roars of laughter, the conservative agricultural members brought forward overwhelming evidence to show that cows cannot be fed on chalk downland, and the debate collapsed.

The temperature of London, and grouse shooting on the cooler northern moors did the rest. Against all constitutional precedent, according to the radicals, the Holy Mountain was made over to Alexander Trotman on a twenty-one years' lease, on the understanding that he would sublet it to the Church (for a period not debated owing to the cows), and that he would

reward the landowners whose puddled fields had been buried beneath the hill, and also that he would compensate the relatives of the deceased families in accordance with the provisions of the Consolidated Compensation Acts.

The nation, led by the *Halfpenny Press*, rejoiced. Church bells were rung in some places. There was, it is true, something of an outcry when, after prorogation of Parliament, the President of the Local Government Board authorised, of himself, the extension of the Central London tube railway to the foot of the Holy Mountain. But the *Halfpenny Press* pointed out that in a time of swift and ever-growing progress, national works could not, and ought not to, wait for Parliament's return from its holidays. Either Parliament would have to sit all the year round, or else ministers should be able to anticipate provisionally the enactments of a subsequent session. "The Constitution must be brought up to date!"

"That's only common sense," Mr. Trotman observed. "I've often told the town council the same thing, but they won't listen to reason and can't understand progress when they do."

VIII

In September, Mrs. Trotman took Alec to Weymouth. She was secretly delighted at the prospect of showing her wonderful unfortunate son to the public outside his native town, and the public exhibited its appreciation in the customary manner—by mobbing him. On the third day of their visit, an American woman, not long landed from the Cherbourg boat, flung her arms round Alec, exclaiming: "You poor boy! I guess you English will beat us after all if you've gotten mountains to move for you." And she kissed him several times, as if he had been a pianist.

It was this episode which decided Mrs. Trotman to take Alec on to Weston-super-Mare, under the assumed style of Mrs. and Mr. Alexander Argyll. Visitors at the boarding-house wondered what woman it was who talked so constantly of good manners and decent privacy. A major's wife, they said, until her extremely elegant and finical behaviour at table undeceived them. A romantic adventuress, they hazarded; certainly *not* a relation of the Dukes of Argyll. The many portraits of Alec, which had appeared in the papers, were of little use in identifying him; for the portraits had idealised him according to the popular notion of how a young mover of mountains ought to look, and illness had, so to speak, very much de-idealised him. Mrs.

Argyll and son spent a fairly happy ten days at Weston before their landlady drew Mrs. Argyll aside after lunch and said: "Dear Mrs. Argyll, there's a lady come here, No. 13, who went to that Crystal Palace revival, and she says she's *sure* your son is the Alexander Trotman who moved the mountain. Now, if you could tell me, quite in secret, that he has patronised my establishment. . . . Poor young gentleman! It is so hard to make both ends meet. The short season here . . . to think of his looking so ill. . . ."

This was precisely what Mrs. Trotman had been hungering for. Quite in secret, during half an hour's chat in the private back sitting-room, the landlady was informed of everything, and a good deal more besides. At dinner that evening, whilst the fish-balls were being served (most of the guests were not interested in faked-up fish), there was something of an ovation—very nearly speeches. A spinster, resident in the house, offered Alec a share of her bottle of colonial port-wine, and begged Mrs. Trotman to accept for her poor, poor son a box of the special strengthening pills recommended so highly by Lady Coate of Brandon. Only doses of brandy enabled Alec to leave Weston next day for Trowbury.

While he was away the question of the mayoralty settled itself. Those who talked much, Mr. Ganthorn in particular, impressed upon those who talked less, three main considerations. First, that having a celebrated mayor would attract notice and wealthy residents to the salubrious town of Trowbury; second, that the political deadlock (whether the mayor should be Conservative or Liberal) would be avoided, since Alexander Trotman was too young to have political opinions and in any case had no vote; third—and this was the crowning reason—they of Trowbury would look such various sorts of fools if they did not, after all that had appeared in the press, put the Mountain-Mover into the high office of mayor. Mr. Trotman, with a show of modesty and reluctance, agreed perfectly. The press, he said with an air of resignation, did expect the mayoralty to devolve upon his son. He could assure them, on the authority of his friend, Sir Pushcott Bingley, that it was so. It was no use going against things. . . .

"And so say all of us!" they all replied in effect.

The events of Lord Mayor's week, as the children called it, began to excite the town, and fortunately drew attention from some muddle or other (no one knew exactly what) in the borough accounts.

On Sunday, November 6, the outgoing Mayor and the

Corporation attended morning service at the Parish Church in all municipal state, preceded by mace-bearers and guarded by the Fire Brigade in full uniform. Alec was absent ; his mother thought it best for him to husband his strength. The Vicar did not preach one of those excessively personal sermons which so delight a small town. He took as his text, *Take heed lest ye fall ;* and under five heads followed by a peroration, in the good old-fashioned way, he showed how and why pride goes before a fall. Trowbury, already annoyed by the smallness of the Vicar's subscriptions to local objects, out of his stipend of £230 a year net, was still more incensed by what it termed his pessimism. Church services, the windbags said, ought to be brighter. It was the clergy's own fault that people stayed away, as they indeed sometimes did, from church. If *they* had had the choosing of the hymns—nice bright hymns—something to sing at—something to buck them up for the stress and strain of modern life's money-making ! . . . What was the good of telling them they were miserable sinners ? How could the Vicar expect liberal Easter offerings if he took no pains to please Trowbury ?

On the Monday, the Outgoing Mayor's Supper took place. On the whole, it went off more satisfactorily than municipal Divine Service. Formerly, in heartier days, it had been called the Mayor's Wine Party, but in deference to teetotalers, the name had been altered to Outgoing Mayor's Supper. Not that its character was changed ; liquor was still consumed ; but the name—the said name—was more temperate, and reference to total abstinence as a cure-all for the poverty of the working classes could now be made in speeches. That was a famous victory for local temperance.

Alderman Trotman had spent but little during his year of office. With the help of his wife he had made a good show on small money. He reckoned, indeed, that if he took into account the free advertisement the mayoralty gave his business (in his official speeches he had frequently referred to the lamentable adulteration of food-stuffs, and, by implication, to the purity of the Famous Groceries), he was nothing out of pocket and his salary or honorarium as mayor was almost entirely clear profit. Therefore, with characteristic generosity, he decided that, retaining fifty pounds for himself exclusively, he would spend the other fifty in giving a really classy (his own word) outgoing supper. He ordered down from his own wholesale house several cases of wine and liqueurs at trade prices. He took spirits out of bond. On the advice of Mr. Ganthorn, who had once attended a professional congress in Paris, absinthe was served in

the antechamber before the meal, thus confirming the popular impression of the Mayor's enterprise, his *savoir-faire* and his interest in the *Entente Cordiale*. Most of the guests refused the stuff as too much like cough-mixture, but it is related by those who ought to know that in the night one worthy borough councilloress had to drag her husband out from beneath the bed, whither, he averred, wild horses had chased him in his dreams.

Municipal dishes, in towns like Trowbury, preserve from year to year such a sameness that, contrary to general opinion, the speeches are often a welcome diversion from the food. The guests do eat, of course, and that right heartily, as a matter of longstanding habit; they drink, too, because neither alcohol nor the virtuousness of abstaining ever pall; and then they wait in a cloud of smoke to hear something about the latest borough squabble or the last of the council's muddles, or some complimentary reference to their own indispensable services.

The first one or two courses of Alderman Trotman's supper went rather heavily. Afterwards the guests, having tasted his wines and more of his strange liqueurs, congratulated him on his distinguished son, for whom several of those present prophesied greatness. Finally, when they had gone back to "Good old whisky"—as a witty alderman greeted it amid loud laughter—they fell to congratulating the outgoing mayor on his noble self.

Hilarious was the remainder of the feast. Profuse the thanks. For an evening, at least, the burgesses were united. At the moment of breaking up, you might have thought the genial old days were back again. His worship, together with Mr. Ganthorn and Alderman Clinch, stood on the pavement outside the Town Hall, singing—singing a religioso-sentimental ditty! The police looked on respectfully.

Then, suddenly, the brute's teeth showed. A young woman, partly veiled, walked round the corner, touched Mr. Ganthorn's arm, and tried to draw him away and speak to him.

"Here, Mr. Mayor," shouted Ganthorn jocularly, "your progressive town's as bad as London."

Whereupon he saw who it was.

But Mr. Clinch was already saying, "Give her in charge."

"Yes, give her in charge," echoed the Mayor. "Here, constable, constable!"

"Very good, your worship."

"Oh, no!" said Ganthorn.

"Yes!" commanded his worship.

"Yes, yes. Of course. Disgraceful!" Mr. Clinch exclaimed.

"What for, sir?" asked the policeman, taking out his note-book.

"The usual," replied the Mayor, "in the public thoroughfare."

"But will any of you gentlemen come forward and give evidence to-morrow?" the policeman inquired. "It's no use me taking her in charge if you don't."

"What'll she get?" asked Ganthorn.

"Oh!" replied his worship, "I'll have her turned out of the town when she's done time."

Mr. Ganthorn was beginning to protest.

"Disgraceful!" repeated Mr. Clinch. "An offence against public morality. *I* will come."

"Take her away, constable," the Mayor continued. "You'll be all right. I shall be on the bench. Don't put me down as giving her in charge, and that'll be all right."

"Very good, your worship.—Come on, now! Come quiet!"

It was noteworthy how very quiet the young woman was.

The three borough fathers went on to Mr. Ganthorn's house, where, with some others earlier arrived, they extended the merriment of the evening.

And the policeman locked the young woman up. But, being kindly disposed to all such, a gallant policeman in his heart, he supplied her with paper, pencil, and an envelope; allowed her to write a note addressed to Miss J. Jepp, and went slightly off his beat to drop the letter into the letter-box of Clinch's Emporium.

IX

Very early on Mayor's Day Mrs. Trotman got up and peeped out of the window. To her great relief there was no rain, though a black north-easter was blowing off the Downs.

When Mr. Trotman marched downstairs it was in his cotton shop-jacket and trodden-over carpet slippers. Even he was flurried. "Get that boy up," he said to his wife.

"But I want him to sleep on as long as he can," replied that lady, who finally had got up dressed for going out or for receiving visitors.

"Get him up, I say. He's not ill now. Laziness, that's what 'tis. He'll be late. My mayoralty has gone off all right and I'll see that his does too."

"'Twouldn't have if it hadn't been for me hurrying you out of bed often and often. Why, I've half dressed you ever so many mornings!"

"Be quiet! I'm busy."

The police inspector entered:

"Court is at ten, your worship."

"Right. Any cases?"

"Only the one from last night."

"H'm. . . . Need we take it? Give her another chance."

"Must be taken now, your worship. Gone too far. She's been in the cells all night."

"I'll be there then."

As the inspector was going out, Messrs. Ganthorn and Clinch came in:

"I say, how about that girl, Mr. Mayor?"

"I'm going to hear the case at ten o'clock."

"But look here, I can't give evidence. There'll be a scandal. You know how people talk."

Mr. Clinch took up the protest: "and I can't possibly come," he said. "Autumn stocktaking. Means pounds to me."

"But you're coming to the council meeting and church and the dinner, aren't you?"

"That's another thing. Duty. Besides, I don't know whether I shall be able to get away for church."

Mr. Clinch's large fat face did not look very pressed for time. "I shall go up to town by the nine-fifty if I've got to appear."

"And where will you go to in town, eh?" Mr. Ganthorn inquired.

Silence.

Each spent a few moments measuring the other one's and his own interests.

Mr. Clinch walked to the door, stood there fumbling his heavy watch-chain, snorting and puffing, wishing for the wings of a dove perhaps. Meanwhile Mr. Ganthorn buttonholed the Justice of the Peace.

"Look here, Trotman, I simply mustn't be mixed up in this. D'you hear? If I am, I shall *make reprisals*. Those borough accounts . . ."

"All right, all right! There's no need to talk like that. I'll see to it. We don't want anything of that sort to-day. Everything will be in the London papers. Those infernal reporters. . . . We're stark in the eyes of the world here. I'll work it all right, and if I can't I'll allow an adjournment. I don't suppose she'll be represented by a lawyer.

Mr. Ganthorn's face brightened. As he hurried out of the door to catch up Mr. Clinch, he called back: "The better the day the better the deed, Trotman!"

And as he went down the street with Mr. Clinch, he remarked sapiently : " You can always twist that old fool round your finger if you know the way to get at him."

Nevertheless the tone of his voice was by no means free from anxiety.

X

News spread rapidly through the town : " There's a good case coming on before the beak ! " Somewhat before ten o'clock, a little knot of people had gathered outside the double door on which was painted in bold white letters *Magistrates' Court, Public Entrance.* From minute to minute another loiterer would join the group, or a cyclist would dismount at the edge of the pavement and remain talking there. A butcher's cart, a farmer's gig, a motor-car drew up in the road. An air of expectancy was noticeable in everybody.

When the Mayor arrived a movement was made to view him, and while he was passing in through the magistrates' entrance, he heard behind him a faint-hearted hoot, and a " Well, what 'bout it, 'Mendment Trotman ? "

He had hardly thought that news of the case would have spread abroad so early. He felt an impulse to turn back and have it out with the impertinent person, but, luckily remembering his dignity, conquering nobly the base instinct, he proceeded in and took his seat in the dark fusty little court. On the bench also, there beforehand, was one of those magisterial nonentities who, attending every court, does little except give seven days and platitudinous advice to tramps. Mr. Trotman's will would be free from interference. Those two magistrates would take the charges.

Before the prisoner was brought in, however, the Superintendent of Police desired respectfully to congratulate his worship on an occurrence without precedent in the history of Trowbury, namely that, from that day forward, father and son would be sitting on the same borough bench. The police, he said, had always found his worship a just, helpful, and " perspicious " magistrate. No doubt his distinguished son would have inherited the same qualities, only he, the Superintendent, hoped that the Mayor-elect would not try his, the Mayor-elect's miraculous powers upon the court, the police station, or the prison. (Laughter.) The Mayor-elect must be in possession of powers as yet unexplained by science. But the police were only ordinary men. There had been complaints against them, but

his worship knew that they always tried to discharge their difficult and onerous duties to the best of their ability.

His worship signified that he did know, and beamed upon the Superintendent.

Applause in court.

The magistrates' clerk—a white-haired old man whose robust common sense had directed many a fuddled magistrate, had prevented many a miscarriage of justice—was heard to break his quill and to growl, "Damn'd rot!"

His worship would now hear the case.

Miss Starkey, small and frail, was brought in by a large blue constable who appeared positively to overhang her. Every neck craned forward. She looked round defiantly, recognised some one at the back of the court, and smiled.

The charge, solicitation, was read over to her.

Evidence was brought by the police to the effect that on the previous evening she, being twenty-four years of age, did behave in a wanton and disorderly manner in the streets of Trowbury, outside the Town Hall, to wit; that she had been of no occupation since the birth of her child; that she was unmarried; but she had never applied for an affiliation order; that she was not known to have any private means; that she plucked a certain gentleman's arm outside the Town Hall; that she made certain overtures to him; that it was not known exactly what she said.

His worship remarked severely that it was the worst case of the sort he had ever had to try, and that he was glad to know prisoner was not a native of Trowbury. More evidence was called for, but, as the police explained, the gentleman refused to appear against her. His worship had been present . . .

"Can't be on the bench and in the witness-box too," said the magistrates' clerk. "Is there no more evidence, nothing as to what she said? You'd better discharge her, sir."

Mr. Trotman began a speech setting forth the wickedness of the prisoner's conduct, the sad immorality of her life, and the good repute of Trowbury. Before he had got very far, a note was handed up to him from a young woman at the back of the court. He read; gasped; ended his speech abruptly with: "As you are a first offender, Starkey, the sentence of the court is that the police be instructed to see that you remove yourself from the town of Trowbury within twenty-four hours."

"That's a bit better," observed the clerk.

Miss Starkey was removed. When she was ready to leave the precincts of the court, the friendly policeman told her:

"You're living outside the town, ain't you? He didn't say as how you wasn't to live where you have been, but don't you get caught at it again, young woman, or you'll get it hot."

His worship said, before leaving the bench, that people would see now, he hoped, his good reasons for dismissing the prisoner. . . .

"Not the prisoner, now," interjected the clerk.

"For dismissing the *late* prisoner," continued Mr. Trotman, "from her place in my establishment."

After his worship had departed (to the Blue Boar) and whilst the court was being closed up again, the note was found beneath the magistrate's chair, whither it must have dropped instead of into the worshipful pocket. It was read aloud to the accompaniment of a general laugh; for it ran:

"It was your own son that got her into trouble, Mr. Trotman."

"So I thought," said the clerk, gathering up his papers.

Mr. Clinch very soon heard that his assistant, Miss Jepp, had been at the police court and had sent up to Mr. Trotman a note which made him look queer. It was also reported to Mr. Clinch that she had been in constant communication with, and had visited regularly, the unhappy Miss Starkey. He therefore tried menacingly to question her on the interesting and disgraceful subject, and that failing, he gave her a month's notice of dismissal in such opprobrious terms that she decided to leave that same day, and did so. Unfortunately, he could not prevent her (Mrs. Clinch refused to have anything to do with seizing her luggage), nor could he well claim a month's wages from her in lieu of notice, as he would otherwise have done; for his pure wrath had led him to attack her before every one in the Emporium with such impure language that a full half-dozen could have borne witness against him had he sued Miss Jepp or had she brought an action against him for defamation of character.

He pitied himself profoundly, and wondered what the world was coming to.

XI

Mrs. Trotman had a very trying morning with her son, the Mayor-elect. As the hour of the statutory meeting of the borough council drew near, he suddenly took it into his head to look on mayor-making as an insupportable ordeal; and he declared that, if they really wanted to make him Mayor, they could easily do it in his absence. "For goodness' sake, don't

tell your father so!" exclaimed poor Mrs. Trotman. She tried to brace up her son first with thin gruel and brandy, then with hot bovril, then with a special brand of tinned truffled chicken that he was fond of, and lastly with port-wine jelly. Three-quarters of an hour before noon Mr. Trotman returned home from court; he said:

"Where's Alec?"

"He's not very well, James."

"Can't help that now. See he's ready. Where's my white shirt? Where have you put my patent boots? Has he got a clean collar?"

"James! As if I shouldn't see to that. . . ."

"All right: I haven't always. Make haste. Not a moment to spare.

At the end of a period of tremendous bustle, the Mayor took the Mayor-elect off to the Town Hall. He remarked on the way that the Mayor-elect had not shaved himself properly behind the jaw and wanted to know why he hadn't been to a hairdresser's for once.

Several councillors were waiting at the entrance and in the vestibule. They were telling each other beforehand what they were going to say—like naughty boys outside a headmaster's study door;—for which reason it was that the statutory meeting in the old Georgian council chamber, hung round with framed charters and portraits of past Mayors and curiously decorated royalties, resolved itself into a reproduction of rehearsed harangues and a reduction thereof by the local reporters into something resembling King's English.

Alec was told that he was a lucky young dog, and then the council seated itself for business, the Mayor-elect being on the right hand of the outgoing Mayor. Nominations for the office of Mayor were formally invited—the election had, of course, been settled long ago. Mr. Ganthorn rose to speak. He stood silent till only the fatter councillors' breathing could be heard, then:

"There is no need," he said, perhaps with a double meaning, "to make long speeches. Alderman Trotman, the Mayor, and Mr. Alexander Trotman, the Mayor-elect, are both of them as well known as they are highly respected. I have been connected with them in many business transactions, public as well as private, and have always found them honest and straightforward and upright. The man who succeeds in business is the man to trust in public affairs—look at the immense progress of America under the rule of business men. It is the first time within living memory that our Mayor has been chosen from without the

council. It is the first time in the history of our loyal and ancient borough that a son has succeeded his father in the highest office it is ours to confer. But I need say no more, because the occasion and the reason of it is public throughout the land, and our mayoral election here is a national affair, and Trowbury stands—thanks to the press—before the eyes of the civilised world. That, gentlemen, is good for trade. The hotel proprietors are already reporting better receipts. It is good for trade, I repeat. The fortunes of Trowbury are on the turn. On the advantages of choosing a mayor outside the council, and they are many, I will not now enlarge. Many towns have lords and earls. Mr. Alexander Trotman is not a lord or an earl—though nobody knows what *may* happen—(applause)—and he is more celebrated than either. I beg to propose Mr. Alexander Trotman as Mayor. The Mountain-Mover, the Miracle-Worker! Long live Alexander . . . I beg your pardon."

"This isn't the Mayor's dinner, Ganthorn!" arose in a chorus which was not taken down by the reporters.

Alderman Clinch rose to say a few words seconding the motion. In the excitement of speech-making, he relapsed from the polite tones of a draper's shop to the mongrel English of a provincial burgess, retaining, nevertheless, some of the delicacy which he was accustomed to use in selling garments to a lady. He endorsed every word his good friend, Mr. Ganthorn, had said, and remarked in speaking of the Mayor-elect: "I do think as it's wonderful to do what he did moving Ramshorn Hill to London without even taking a third-class ticket for it (which joke did not go down) and in succeeding his respected father as mayor of this here town. (Applause.) We're all proud for to know Messrs. Trotman and Son. It's a good old firm, I say. I'm not going to say much, as I knows of, but I do want to say that this is a proud day for Messrs. Trotman, and a proud day for the good old town of Trowbury; and I hope Alderman Trotman will do good business and Master Alec bring good trade to the town for many a year to come, I do. And I desires to take this here opportunity of congratulating both on 'em. That's all as I've got to say. . . . Oh, yes! I seconds the motion."

"And zo zay all on us!" cried a young member who was opposed in politics to Mr. Clinch, and who, not being listened to, looked innocent with a faint *he-he!*

The motion was put and carried unanimously amid a loud applause that only the Town Clerk's forbidding legal aspect prevented from becoming uproarious. Mr. Trotman rose from

his seat and made Alec do the same. Round his son's neck he placed the chain of office; to him he gave the seal; and then, exchanging places, he sat him down rather forcibly in the mayoral chair. Alec swore sundry quaint and formidable oaths, signed what the Town Clerk called the long and honourable roll of the Mayors of Trowbury, and was once more egged out of his chair—this time to return thanks.

It was a part of the ceremony for which his father had forgotten to prepare him. He stood up blankly. Then, remembering no doubt the tone of the speeches that had gone before, he began: "Thank you very much, gentlemen. A great honour. I didn't want to be Mayor—as true as I'm here. . . ."

Realising he had not said quite the right thing, he looked round at his father; looked at the councillors seated along the table in various comfortable attitudes, one or two of them with sympathetic faces; looked up at the ceiling; blushed; sat down.

The ex-Mayor sprang up:

"As you know, gentlemen, my son, the Mayor, has hardly yet recovered from a long and dangerous illness, and under the circumstances you will not expect him to thank you at length for the very great honour you have done him—us—our family. Speaking as an alderman and a tradesman in a large way of business, and not as father of the present Mayor, I can only say that, in making my son Mayor, we have done the very best thing for the town. Gentlemen, I believe in advertisement. It is by advertisement—and a sound stock—that I have built up my business from a small way to the largest and growing grocery establishment in the town. I believe, I say, in advertisement; advertisement for a business and advertisement for a town, which is only a large business with the Mayor as director. My friend, Sir Pushcott Bingley, whom we hope to see at the dinner to-night—(applause)—he assures me that to-day's proceedings will be fully reported and illustrated in the greatest newspaper the world has ever seen. I allude to the *Halfpenny Press*. That is what I call a thorough good advertisement for our good old town. I hope you will forgive my son, our Mayor, any shortcomings due to his youth, bad health, or inexperience; and I can assure you that I shall always be at his right hand to make his year of office a success and to help in the progress of the good old loyal borough of Trowbury."

During the subsequent business, which included the election of new aldermen and the appointment of the year's committees, Mr. Trotman did make himself of the very greatest use. But for his repeated admonition, "Harmony, gentlemen! Harmony

on *this* day!" and his skill in defeating by amendments and relegation to committee any inquiry into the state of the borough's minor finances, his son's first council meeting would in all probability have been the reverse of pleasant.

At the conclusion, he invited the council to accompany his son, the Mayor, to the parish church at half-past three in the afternoon.

And in the street, after the meeting had broken up, while the usual after-meeting was being held, it was discovered that the customary vote of thanks to the ex-Mayor had been clean forgotten.

"Don't mention it, gentlemen," said the ex-Mayor. "My son's election is *my* vote of thanks."

Mrs. Trotman had wished Alec to have a brand-new mayoral robe; she wanted to choose the material herself; but Mr. Trotman ridiculed the idea. If the old one was good enough for his own self, wasn't it good enough for his son. Mrs. Trotman spent most of the time between the statutory meeting and the church service in trying to clean out a recognisable wine-stain on the left-hand side of the robe's front. She consulted her favourite chemist as to the best solvent for iron-mouldy stains. After much hard work, she succeeded in turning the stain into a blotch, and in cleaning only too visibly a circle of the robe just around the blotch—in giving the blotch a halo, as it were.

In a furred blue blotched mantle did Alec march from the Town Hall to the parish church. The vicar, the mace-bearers and the town-crier went before him, his father almost beside him, and his mother a short way off with the smelling-salts. The procession, coloured in front and funereally black behind, proceeded with step slow and dignified from the grey November daylight into the dim parish church. The congregation which had gathered there stood up while the corporation passed up the nave to its high carved wooden seats in the chancel. Out of the blackness the sound of the organ crept as if it were a messenger from some other world or from the depths of Trowbury's history.

Mrs. Trotman had made the vicar promise that divine service should be as short as possible, for, she said, Alec could not attend a long service and the dinner too, and it was most necessary he should be present at the dinner. For that reason the vicar, an uncompromising churchman in controversy, contented himself in the pulpit with expressing his satisfaction that the youthful Mayor, after taking part in a heretical revival

at the Crystal Palace, should, on the most important day of his young life, have returned to his mother-church, the church where he had been christened—a step taken, no doubt, on his own initiative, for which he was greatly to be honoured. Much more he said in the same vein, receiving Alec into his church as a very prodigal son.

Tactless vicar! Mr. Trotman was furious. Dictate what his son should, and should not, do indeed! Hadn't his son come to church that day at the risk of his health, at the risk of his life perhaps? There was a nodding and a whispering among the members of the corporation as they prepared to leave their seats and to march down to the west door.

Suddenly, just at the crossing of the aisles, an old woman in a black wobbling bonnet trimmed with bobby-dazzlers, ran out of a pew and flung herself on Alec.

"La, Master Allie, how glad I be to see 'ee in that there nice gown! But don' 'ee go movin' no more hills and losin' the squire's lambs. How like your dear father you d' look! An' I've nursed both on 'ee, I have!"

She insisted on a kiss. "Give your ol' nursie a kiss, now do 'ee." Then she brought his head down to a level with hers and whispered in a loud voice: "They be goin' to leave the little chap 'long with me when they goes to Lon'on, an' you come out an' see your own just whenever you like. Blood's thicker than water, Allie dear. . . ."

Mr. Trotman replaced her forcibly in her pew. With all its antique dignity the corporation left the church. A reverent babble arose. How the ex-Mayor had scowled!

Merrily the bells clashed out.

XII

Alec himself did not understand fully the drift of old Mrs. Parfitt's speech in church:

When Mr. Clinch had given Julia notice in a volley of unclean language, she had rushed from the shop to her bedroom red in the face and breathless with indignation. She intended to pack and leave the Emporium at once. But what could she do? She would have either to go down below again and claim the wages that were due to her, or find Mrs. Clinch, or spend three days drawing enough money from the Post Office Saving's Bank. She could not possibly go right away at once. After she had calmed down a little, concluding that she might just as well be hung for a sheep as a bodkin, and feeling inclined to do

nothing so much as to defy Mr. Clinch, she put on her yellow hat, now long past its prime, and a jacket, and hurried off out in the direction of Mrs. Parfitt's. The rapid walk by heating her body further cooled her mind. Her attention was distracted by the dead leaves that an autumn wind blew down upon her head. They fell into the brim of her hat, and she had to take it off, still walking quickly, in order to clean them out. The age of the hat shocked her. She had not the moral support of being well dressed. And how miserably the varicose veins in her right leg ached!

Further up the road she saw three or four loutish youths scrambling along with comic gait after a woman whose skirts swung and flapped around her because she was going at a greater pace than her legs were made for. Surely, Julia thought, that's Edie's short jacket or one very like it, and Edie's hat. . . .

It was Miss Starkey.

She stopped and, turning round, gesticulated angrily at the louts behind her. The wind lifted her hat upright. The louts laughed recklessly. She whisked round again and hastened on with the louts still behind her, still mimicking her gait.

Julia caught them up. She took Miss Starkey's arm and looked a look at the louts. Dropping behind with a last ribald insult, they stopped to light cigarettes.

All that Miss Starkey asked Julia or said to her was, "What d'you want?"

"Edie, dear, I'll come with you. I was coming out. I was, really."

"You can come if you like.—Oh, Julie! I feel so faint."

"There, there!" Julia cosseted her, and they walked on to the cottage. Julia wept a little, but without breaking down. Edith Starkey remained sulky and dry-eyed. Her face and gait revealed her state of mind.

Mrs. Parfitt in her lonely little cottage knew nothing of what had happened either to Miss Starkey or to Julia. Having the baby to herself had pleased the old woman, and so had the absence for a night of the baby's mother, whom she had never quite taken to and whom she had kept at the cottage only because she was lonely, and for the baby's and her Allie and his sweetheart's sake. Though quite certain in her old woman's mind that Alec was at the bottom of Miss Starkey's mischance, she did not inquire, neither was she told.

"My dear," she exclaimed, "where *have* you been to, leaving the baby and all. And I've a-had to feed 'en wi' spoon-

food and he's done beautiful 'cept for a bit o' wind in his precious little tummie."

Miss Starkey took her baby. Then at last she wept, while old Mrs. Parfitt ejaculated from time to time: "Here's a pretty kettle o' fish! Here's a pretty kettle o' fish. I do declare! Now, do 'ee, my dear. . . . There, there! try an' bide quiet."

Events to date were related—with certain reservations. Miss Starkey spoke of Mr. Ganthorn, his domestic arrangements, with a vehemence which rather astonished and mystified Julia. Mrs. Parfitt was told about the police court, and that Mr. Trotman had only sentenced Miss Starkey to remove herself from the moral town of Trowbury. It was the policeman and the sentence which had fixed themselves in Mrs. Parfitt's mind, much more than the injustice, for since she had lived among labouring people she had lost her hold on official morality and had come to regard troubles with the police as a part of life.

"Ah!" she said, "Mr. Trotman let 'ee off wi' that, did he, when you didn't ought to have been summoned at all. But he didn't know that, bless you. He's such a kind sort o' man. But look 'ee, my dears, if I be going to see Master Alec go to church in his mayor's mantle an' all, I must hurry up, an' I 'spect the baker's cart, as I've a-give a cup o' tea to many a time on a hot day, will gie I a lift into Trowbury."

Mrs. Parfitt had two lady's maids that afternoon. Her hair was done and her bonnet set on her head so that she said she'd hardly ha' knowed herself; and off she went in her baker's cart.

Then the two young women, each disgraced, both lonely, fell to talking over ways and means.

What they did not tell one another was the most important part of their conversation. Miss Starkey allowed Julia to think her very very greatly wronged, nothing more; while Julia hid the practical charity in her heart—the very real charity for a woman in her position—under a gush of sentiment. Occasionally one of them sniffed and dropped a few tears. Neither was able to suggest any promising course of action until Julia said that her old guv'nor in London might take her back.

"London! London!" Miss Starkey took up the word, and the hope that lay in it, with all the ardour which London imposes on untravelled provincials. "London!" They would go to London. That was it.

But baby? Who would take care of the baby? Mrs. Parfitt? Miss Starkey was sure she would. Julia thought so too. She still had some money in spite of what she had lent

—or given—Miss Starkey. Instead of a new dress, she had had the yellow one turned and retrimmed. The material had been good. . . .

"You're a dear, Julie!"

But London! They rang the changes on the magic word, the first mention of which had been decisive.

Damnable Dick Whittington?

After dark—they were sitting without a light—Mrs. Parfitt's small toppling footsteps approached the cottage.

"I've a-seen him an' I lost me head, I did, an' I didn't mean to, but there. . . . An' I kissed 'en as he were coming down the church in his lovely big blue mantle, an' I told 'en as the little chap were as right as ninepence an' as he could come out an' see 'en just the same now he *is* Mayor; an' his father, he took hold o' my poor arm an' pushed I into the wrong pew; but I did kiss 'en an' I told 'en the little dear (let I give 'en a kiss!) was quite bonny out here an' as good a baby as you might find; an' look you what a bruise he've a-made on my poor arm—black an' blue—he always had a temper when he were a boy, he did!"

She slipped off her bodice and exhibited the blue mark on her withered old arm. While that was going on, the two girls asked her if she would keep the baby with her.

"On course I will, pretty dear! Not having no childer o' me own. . . . Deary me! Just you leave he here. I've a-nursed James Trotman, an' Master Allie, both on 'em mayors, an' why shouldn't I nurse this little precious too, for company like. The babies as I nurse be all mayors."

"There's the Mayor's Dinner to-night," said Miss Starkey, who always showed impatience when Mrs. Parfitt babbled on, and always had festivities in her mind.

"They must be going in to it now," Julia added. "I must go. I really must. Good-bye, dear."

"Don't *you* get in their light when they're coming out—that's all!"

Miss Starkey's voice could be very bitterly unpleasant. The *that's all* echoed in Julia's ears as she walked back to the Emporium. It seemed to be dragging her into the company of the non-respectable. It depressed her and made her feel as if the world was off its hinges. Again the side-door of the Emporium banged behind her as if she were still its property, still forced to sell herself for a bed, bad food, and a few dresses. *That's all!*

And it was all.

XIII

In reporting the mayoral banquet, the *Trowbury Guardian*, with a humility and enterprise rare among local newspapers, did it's best to imitate the *Halfpenny Press*. It was notably successful in the use of headlines.

THE HOLY MOUNTAIN

ALEXANDER TROTMAN

MADE

MAYOR

OF HIS NATIVE TOWN

(Then followed an account in pyrotechnical language of the investiture of Alec Trotman as Mayor of the ancient borough, together with photographs of himself and his relatives, and a faked reproduction, from a borrowed block, of the Mountain-Mover standing in an inspired attitude on the summit of a precipitous Holy Mountain.)

TROWBURY'S MAYOR'S

BANQUET

BRILLIANT LOCAL FUNCTION

DELAINE JENKYNS, M.P.

IN THE CHAIR

IMPORTANT SPEECHES

THE MAYOR'S HEALTH

INTERVIEW WITH HIS DOCTOR

Full copyright account

"TROWBURY CHRONICLE" ENLARGED

TO SIXTY COLUMNS

"Yesterday, at noon, amid the alderman and councillors assembled in the historic council chamber, Mr. Alexander Trotman was unanimously elected Mayor of Trowbury, and invested with the heavy gold chain of office. The value of the mayoral chain is estimated at £420. In the fine old Parish Church, beneath tattered flags from Waterloo, Inkerman and Balaklava, his mayoralty received Divine Sanction. Alexander Trotman, Mayor of Trowbury! The prophet honoured in his own country!

"THE MAYORAL BANQUET

was held in the Town Hall Assembly Rooms. A good spread, worthy of Trowbury's gastronomic traditions, was provided by mine host of the Blue Boar Hotel, reinforced by a celebrated London caterer. The tipsy cake was moulded into the form of the Holy Mountain, and inlaid with the heraldic arms of Trowbury in coloured jellies.

"The Mayor was surrounded by a representative company of aldermen, councillors, borough officials, and burgesses, and by the flower of the local nobility and gentry.

"The Right Honourable Delaine Jenkyns, Member for the Trowbury division of Wiltshire, occupied the chair.

"Grace before and after meat was said by the Vicar of Trowbury.

"The Chairman first gave the toast of King and Empire, followed by that of the Prince and Princess of Wales and the Royal Family. Great and loyal enthusiasm prevailed."

"UNAVOIDABLE ABSENTEES

"The Chairman read a telegram from the King :

"'*I am commanded by his Majesty to thank the loyal and ancient borough of Trowbury.*'

"A telegram from Sir Pushcott Bingley, Bart., Director of the *Halfpenny Press*, was next read :

"'*Empire watching Mountain-Mover's festive banquet. Deeply regret detained in town.*'

"It was understood that the ex-Mayor had also received a private communication from Sir Pushcott Bingley. When the resounding applause which followed the reading of the telegram had died down, and letters of apology for unavoidable absence had been read from several noblemen and gentlemen, Mr. Ald. Clinch, the senior alderman, gave in felicitous terms the Bishop and Clergy and Ministers of all Denominations.

"The Vicar, in replying, alluded to the strange coincidence that the evening the miracle transpired he had been preaching from the text : 'If ye have faith even as a grain of mustard seed ye shall say to this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove.' He regarded it as another sign of Almighty God's watchfulness over His Church and over Trowbury. It spoke well for the natural pleasures of temperate eating and drinking, that the clergy and ministers of all denominations could be found at the mayoral banquet peaceably seated together. He was sorry to see how few of the well-cooked dishes the Mayor

was able to partake of, and hoped it would please God to mercifully restore his health—(applause)—grant him a long, useful life—(applause)—and graciously accept his miraculous work for the good of His Holy Church. (Great applause.)

"REV. SNOOKS' PRAYER

"The Rev. Bertram Snooks (Congregational) in responding for the other denominations, said they lived in critical times, and everything tending to promote the cause of religion in an atheistical age—(No, no)—was to be encouraged. Such, he felt, was the removal of the Holy Mountain and the heartfelt, heartening revival at the Crystal Palace, where the attendance of the Mayor, who had worked so great a miracle, even as the prophets of old, had evoked a scene of extraordinary religious enthusiasm—(applause)—and many souls were brought to repentance. He craved permission on so auspicious an occasion to offer up the following prayer: 'O Almighty God, who art always with us when upon our knees we cry unto thee, vouchsafe that our beloved young Mayor shall receive Thy blessing, and shall evermore perform miracles to the glory of Thine elect, to the furtherance of true religion wheresoever found, and to the confusion of the stiff-necked and of sinners, in Thy Holy Name, Amen.'

"At this stage of the festivities the Vicar pleaded attendance at a bed of sickness, and left.

"The toast of the Army, Navy and other Imperial and Territorial Forces was given amidst intense enthusiasm, one of the councillors remarking that if they could not have work for all, undoubtedly a strong Navy was the next best thing. (Applause.)

(To be continued)

THE MONTH

EDITORIAL: *THE CRITICAL ATTITUDE—Finance; Drama and the Fine Arts; The Dominance of the Irish Question, by* "BRITANNICUS"; *On Licensing, by* H. BELLOC; *John Millington Synge, by* F. NORREYS CONNELL; *Le Roman Français Contemporain, by* CAMILLE MAUCLAIR; *Two Poets, by* EDWARD THOMAS

THE CRITICAL ATTITUDE

Finance

From whatever point of view save that of the strict party man, Mr. Lloyd George's Budget, the creation of a timid brain, is eminently unsatisfactory. For ourselves we had hoped that, definitely throwing down the glove to the landed interests, to the governing classes, the Chancellor of the Exchequer would have cleared the air. We should have known then where we stood. It would have been a reasonable thing for a Chancellor of the Exchequer to say: "I and my colleagues represent the 'have nots.' We intend to make the 'haves' bear the burden of the nation."

This would have been a clear issue. This would have been in effect Socialism. It is probable that the House of Lords would have thrown out the Bill, and the Government could then have gone to the country on the question of Socialism or not Socialism. Then we should have known where we stood.

That is what we desire to know, and until we know that we can never get much further forward. All these questions have to be asked: Has the Government of the Country passed out of the hands of the governing classes into those of the non-tax-paying elector? If that is so, has the non-tax-paying elector made up his mind that he will "hedge" as to his chances of future wealth? For that is what a great popular vote for the spoliation of landlords would imply. For ourselves we very much doubt whether in a nation so individualistic as the English such a vote would ever be obtained. And this the Chancellor of the Exchequer, astute party man as he is, has probably foreseen, or probably he feels it in his bones. The Englishman taken in the rough, the Englishman of the working man's club, of the bar parlour, of the music-halls, of the football match, would appear to us to be almost before everything else a sporting personality—a gambler. His feeling for the rich is, anthropomorphically, one

of envying sympathy. He imagines that he has himself, one day, his chance of growing rich, and we think it very unlikely that definitely and at the poll he will ever be brought to handicap his chances of the rich man's enjoyment.

This is the real heart of the question. This is the real problem that has to be faced by the representatives of any reforming party. They have to convince the industrial portion of the electorate that their conditions of life are unbearable and that their chances of attaining to individual wealth are utterly negligible. They have, in fact, to convince the confirmed gambler of the error of his ways. This they may possibly be able to do : this issue, if he were really a determined democrat, the Chancellor of the Exchequer would have set before the people. As it is, he has imposed upon one particular kind of gambler a burden which, while it is sure to be vexatious, which, while it is sure to appear an attack on the landed interests, will bring in no more than an estimated half-million. Mr. Lloyd George's Budget, in fact, may be an electioneering Budget, but it will prove very poor electioneering. For the class of land upon which he has set this burden is property of which only a small proportion is held by the large country landowner. These pieces of waste ground near towns are owned by a peculiar class of speculators. They are bought far more by solicitors, by land companies, by prospective builders; and they are held under mortgages to banks. In fact they form an almost infinitesimal portion of the interests of the real, great landowners. So that this impost, logically considered, is merely a tax upon speculation of a certain order. To the principle of taxes upon speculation there can obviously be little objection to offer. Had the Chancellor of the Exchequer broadened this principle, this again would have made more clear the position which he and the Government intend to take up.

For, roughly speaking, Socialism will help the man who makes for safety : it will penalise, it will crush out the individualist who stakes his money, his personality, or his abilities in a gamble in futures—of whatever kind. So that had the Budget contained clauses imposing heavy taxes on such things as operations on the cover-system and on all identifiable money-operations which are not investments but mere speculations in the accidental rise or fall of markets—had the Budget contained some such clause, it would have been more satisfactory from

almost every point of view, and it would have adopted a broad basis of principle, instead of having the air of being a mere electioneering device. And, indeed, we can never have a satisfactory Budget from either party until such broad principles are laid down. Mr. Lloyd George has adopted the principle of taxing almost exclusively the rich for the benefit of the poor, and for the maintenance of the State. This is a principle like another, and had it been really and courageously applied we might, or might not, dislike it. But we could not cavil at it on any small lines. We might consider it a policy good or bad for the State. We could hardly attack it in detail. Unfortunately, it is in detail that we have to attack the Finance Bill. Mr. Lloyd George looks around for his political or class enemies. He attacks the liquor interest and the vehicles of the rich. Unfortunately, the main weight of his attack falls upon the pleasures and the locomotion of the poor. A tax of £40 on a motor vehicle which can only be owned by a very rich man is a tax which, however much the rich man may squeal, incommodes him very little. The sum in itself is negligible, and the article upon which it is levied is not an inevitable necessity. But cheap transit is the breath of life to poor men and the Chancellor of the Exchequer puts a tax upon the motor-'bus. If any principle underlay this tax, we might consider that the Government desired to tax locomotion : then why not put a tax upon the coals used in railway trains, the electricity consumed by railways and trams as means of propulsion ? But no, the Liberal party, which is almost always the old-fashioned party, has from the first adopted the theory that the motor-car was the poor man's enemy, the rich man's luxury. We are acquainted with a poor man who lives in Ealing. To reach his work he has to travel every morning to Islington. He earns 22*s.* a week. Where will this poor man be if the enhanced cost of petrol spirit causes the motor-'buses to raise their fares, and the tram companies, and electric railways to raise theirs too ?

In the same way the tax on liquor and on tobacco falls with a dismal hardness upon the poor man. It is a negligible matter to the rich. It is true that the enjoyments of tobacco and liquor are, by a large section of Mr. Lloyd George's followers, regarded as deleterious ; but such as they are, the poor man's pipe and the poor man's pot form almost the whole of the poor man's pleasure. And if Mr. Lloyd George and his adherents are bent on stamping out the public-house and increasing the cost of transport, it would appear to us to be a plain duty of the Government either

to provide the poor man with other pleasures beforehand or to apply the revenue thus obtained to the provision of such pleasures.

It may be regarded as an axiom that the burden of every tax falls upon the consumer. It may be stated as a pendant that the disadvantage of every dole falls upon the recipient. The working man ought to have his Old Age Pension but, from every point of view, he ought to contribute to the cost of it. From every point of view, since the only person who really benefits by the non-contributory system is the employer of labour. And the dole system of Old Age Pensions gives the employer not only the opportunity but even some moral excuse to pay low wages.

The time surely has come when the British working man may be considered fit to look after his own interests. And it is the consumer who pays for the rise in prices. Put then a reasonable tax upon the income of every wage-earner in the country and it will be the consumer, the employer of labour, who will have to pay the increase in cost of the commodity which he purchases. We do not demoralise any other tradesman. We do not give, say, the publisher, doles from public money because the publishing business is in a bad way. Why then should we encourage the workman to be slack in his endeavours to extract from his employer a proper living wage ? And no living wage can be proper that is insufficient to afford provision for old age or against sickness.

Moreover, to impose a direct contribution to the State from every man in the State is to confer a sense of responsibility, and for this reason alone we should advocate the contributory system of dealing with the Old Age Pensions. And having thus accounted for the increase of £12,000,000 in his Budget the really courageous Chancellor of the Exchequer would go on to open his eyes and survey the question of naval expansion. The first thing that would strike him would be that the construction of innumerable warships is a proceeding eminently imbecile. The next thing that would strike him is that if the expenditure upon these toys goes on increasing at its present rate throughout the world, every European State must eventually become bankrupt. Perhaps, indeed, this is the desire of our present rulers, for, since we are the richest State in Europe, we may well continue the competition until all our rivals are ruined and we may still snatch the fat out of the fire. This seems to be a rather silly

notion but it is almost the only construction that we can place upon the present policy of our rulers.

Let us not be misunderstood. We are not now attacking Mr. Lloyd George's Budget. He was, we think, bound to give the country all the *Dreadnoughts* he has provided, but it is the duty of our Statesmen to devise a means by which this branch of the National expenditure shall in the future be put a stop to. We have said that we think that any chance of a common agreement for the restriction of armaments in Europe—that any such chance is absolutely non-existent. We have said also that we consider that war between ourselves and at least one other European Power is probable in the extreme. We are, at the present moment, the strongest naval Power in existence. For whatever may be he statistics of ships built and building, the quality of our *personnel*, the system of long service and the superiority of our shooting, give us a preponderance of the most huge, over any of our European rivals. If then it be a fact that we are so superior and if it be a fact that war is inevitable, the immediate but not the most far-sighted view that our rulers should take of their duty would be to declare war at once upon any Power that nearly threatens us. Actually, however, there remains the alternative, more courageous but less violent, of making the construction of a battleship by any other Power than ourselves a *casus belli*. This may seem an extravagant or an idealist proposal but a moment's reflection will make it appear that the present condition of things for any reasoning being is certainly more extravagant and almost incontestably more idealist—the idealism being of a militarist type. And the militarist ideal is one of the most troublesome things that States have to deal with. Between countries of different degrees of civilisation wars are probably a necessity, but no war is justifiable which does not promote peace. And a war to bring about the reduction of armaments would be a war to promote an ultimate peace. It would be, of course, a folly to throw on to the blatant contents bills of papers the scare-lines, "Britain delivers ultimatum to Switzerland," or whatever may be the Power that we fear. But we have it on good authority that at least one Continental Power would welcome an informal intimation from the Foreign Office that Great Britain, as being the Power most open to damage at sea, would consider an increase of the fleet of any other nation as an unfriendly action directed against herself, and we have no doubt whatever that once this action were taken, several other Powers would

join ourselves. And in this way a minatory Peace Congress would be formed, infinitely more powerful in the cause of disarmament than could be any possible Congress aiming at the reduction of armaments by conciliatory methods.

H.M. CHANCELLOR of the Exchequer is a brave soul: but his is a bird-like one. With the eye of a bird that is near the ground he has observed only the little things. He has attempted to gain the suffrage of, he has attempted, perhaps, to help, the millions of poor voters. He has attempted it with courage, but without imagination. An alien himself, he has attempted to envisage Anglo-Saxon problems, forgetting that in England legislation always goes round by the rules of contrary, yet that, at bottom, it is always bull-headed courage and broad principles that will make a permanent mark.

A POLICY based upon such broad lines: a Budget based upon such principles must command respect in the country and in Europe, and self-respect within the Ministry. And, having set the finances of the country upon a sound basis, the Chancellor of the Exchequer might go on to finer things.

DRAMA AND THE FINE ARTS

THE HOLBEIN *Christina*—THE ROYAL ACADEMY—THE GRAFTON GALLERY: MR. JUSTICE DAY'S COLLECTION—ALDWYCH THEATRE: MR. ARNOLD BENNETT'S *What the Public Wants*—BECHSTEIN HALL: MAX REGER

FOR that the Holbein *Christina* should go out of the country is a calamity so great that the sinking of many battleships should hardly atone for it. England has many Holbeins, but this is the finest Holbein of them all. It is one of the supremest works of art in the world, and all that Art can give us of peace, of mental health, of happiness, are to be obtained from its contemplation. Upon this one matter we permit ourselves to write with deep feeling, for we are inspired by a deep gratitude. For many years we have been in the habit of going to the National Gallery for the purpose of looking at this picture, and we plead rather than urge that this picture should become the property of the nation.

WE observe that exception is taken to its purchase by the nation on the ground that its owner is a duke: but if a mere

newspaper correspondent were captured by brigands and held for ransom, the nation would purchase back his transitory body : by how much the more—even if its owner were ten wicked barons—is it the duty of the nation to ransom this immortal soul from exile ? But if any one needs to be reminded of this necessity, let him read the list of English treasures that have lately passed into foreign hands—the list contributed by Mr. Robert Ross to the *Morning Post*. . . . But there : we had forgotten that we were writing for Englishmen !

The Annual Summer Exhibition at Burlington House being a purely commercial affair, The English Review is hardly concerned with it other than as the agreeable Social function. It would do a great service to the cause of Fine Art in this country if all critics would adopt this attitude. It would have the effect of causing the few better painters who discredit themselves by hanging their pictures on these walls to refrain in the future, and this would be a great gain. It would be a great gain, because better work could then centralise itself more easily. How much greater would be the effect of, say, Mr. Sargent and Mr. Shannon if, exclusively identifying themselves with some small body of able painters, they entirely deserted the Royal Academy. Indeed, how is it possible for any painter of good conscience to remain in this cynical assembly of unmoved commercialists after this year's Chantrey purchase, which would have done credit to a benevolent institution such as the Royal and Ancient Order of Buffaloes and to no other species of society ?

As a matter of fact, of two of the Arts—Painting and the Drama—we are inclined to say that there are possibilities of the arising of really considerable schools in England. It would be hardly fair, though it is suggestive in the extreme, to compare the late Mr. Justice Day's collection of pictures of the Barbizon school, which was dispersed at Christie's on May 13, with the collection of present-day painters of ability that, very much to its credit, the Grafton Gallery has assembled. A committee of taste consists of one—and Mr. Justice Day's task, spread as it was over years, and dominated by a singleness of purpose, was obviously more practicable than is the task for any gallery to assemble within its walls all the good work that is being done by painters to-day. But, if we took, let us say, the Grafton collection as it stands and, weeding it a little to allow of space for the pictures of Mr. Wilson Steer and those of Mr. Sargent

and Mr. Shannon—to name only a few of the works that are being exhibited in London at the moment—such a weeded and strengthened collection would make a very creditable show. It would too, we believe, establish the fact that there does exist at the moment—amongst the painters who count as opposed to those who exhibit at Burlington House—a very earnest, a very hard-working, and upon the whole a very gifted English School of to-day.

May has proved kindly to the British Drama ; it has slain so many plays. And this is splendid. It is splendid because these plays that have died have been the Drama of commerce : it is splendid because it ought—if anything ever will—to prove to the producers of plays that what the public wants is certainly not what the public has been getting. The starting of two Repertory Theatres, Mr. Trench's for Historic and Poetic Drama and Mr. Frohman's for modern plays, is such a step forward that we hope for better times. If these do not succeed it will probably be the fault of the management, not the fault of the public which knows what it wants. The great interest shown in Mr. Galsworthy's *Strife* and the survival of *The Earth* are indicative of the call for something strong. Mr. Arnold Bennett's play, *What the Public Wants*, which will shortly be on the evening bills, requires small comment from us as we hope to publish it ourselves in a forthcoming number.

To the constant cry that modern music in Germany is a decadent art the appearance of Max Reger has come as a counter-blast. For in his music there is certainly nothing decadent in any sense of the word ; and at his hands modern German music does receive a definite vindication. Reger is a reactionary. Strauss and his followers carry the idea of progress and development towards its legitimate end. In their hands, music is evolving, taking the colour, the personality of the century ; and in the process it is not surprising that old traditions are cast aside, old masters, perhaps, decried. This is only natural because the whole energy of the school is bent upon developing the form, as well as the spirit, of what will be to the succeeding generation a characteristic part, at least, of the music of the twentieth century. But Reger's position is detached. He is not intent on finding the newest form to express the musical ideas of to-day ; he is intent on bringing those ideas back to the form which classical traditions have made venerable, of combining, in short, modernity of idea with the classical structure. Such reactionary

methods have the fascination of the hazardous. Moreover, they are valuable because they maintain the old forms in the face of the iconoclastic tendencies of the progressivists, acting as a brake, as it were, upon the possibly too great vehemence of the advance guard. But if this were all it would be but an unsatisfactory experiment, and the result a musical "ghost" —the classic form galvanised by an attempt to force on it an alien individuality.

But Reger's music is much more than this; and it is almost startlingly alive. To the purity and delightful correctness of form which we see in Bach, has been brought a greater harmonic complexity, and quite unmistakably the modern spirit. It has a splendid and dignified sonority, a charming austerity of outlook which ignores any garish sentiment. It is not descriptive music in the ordinary sense of the word. And yet sometimes it is intensely descriptive, but only of things which words cannot describe; things which come straight to the mind of the listener using music—the most subtle and abstract vehicle of expression—as their medium. For example, the second movement in the *Trio in G minor* describes perfectly what can only be suggested faintly in words. It takes us into a world absolutely detached from humanity, yet we get no expression of remoteness. Quick tripping notes on the piano suggest a swift, almost lightning-like, movement followed by the deep stirring of some profound and ponderous force which answers through the deep notes of the 'cello and the piano. We hear an entirely unearthly colloquy; the result is an impression of terror and a curious excitement. Of the many impressions the music gave us that of the Allegretto was the clearest in outline. All the movements in this *Trio* are intensely characteristic. The variations for two pianos on a theme of Beethoven which followed were quite magnificent. It is in his songs that Reger has most often been heard in London, we think. At the first of the two concerts six of them were sung by Mrs. Henry Wood. Frankly, we were greedy for more. All of them had a subtle and delicate charm. Particularly we liked *Das Dorf* with its sweetly mysterious music:

> "Ich zieh an einem Dorf vorbei schläft hinter dunkeln Bäumen
> Nur tief im Garten gehen zwei und träumen."

They are not easy songs to sing, but fortunately Mrs. Wood sang them quite perfectly.

B.

The Dominance of the Irish Question

By "Britannicus"

A DISPASSIONATE onlooker at English politics will find little difficulty in subscribing to the common opinion that the present Government is on the down grade. The reality of the reaction is so indisputable as to make the confirmation of the by-elections seem almost superfluous. But its causes, and particularly its justice, are more obscure. How is it that a singularly able Ministry, which has conducted foreign and Imperial affairs with acknowledged success and which has introduced and passed many admirable measures of social reform, should now find itself in the trough of popular disfavour? Of the capacities of its individual members there can be no question whatever. A more competent set of men with a more insatiable appetite for work has rarely, if ever, governed the country. From the dead-weight of titled inefficients the present Cabinet, considering the traditions of English politics, is commendably and even singularly free. In none of the great Departments of State has there been a positive failure either of policy or administration; and in only one, or at most in only two, is the comparison between the Asquith and the Balfour Cabinets not decisively in favour of the former. The average man, so far as I can gauge his sentiments, has not the least inclination to replace the present Ministers, as individuals and as administrators, in order to let in a crowd of uninspiring mediocrities under Mr. Balfour's leadership. I detect no yearning for the return of Lord Midleton, Mr. Alfred Lyttelton, Mr. Austen Chamberlain or Mr. Akers-Douglas. Even the exclusion from office of Mr. Walter Long seems to be borne with admirable fortitude and resignation. The country, in short, is satisfied and more than satisfied with the *personnel* of the Asquith Ministry. With some of its members, Sir Edward Grey, for instance, Mr. John Burns and Lord Morley, it may even be said to be supremely content. It realises that the conduct of foreign affairs, the handling of the crisis in India, and the South African settlement have not only shown statesmanship of the first order but have completely wiped out the sinister reputation of Liberalism for vacillation and sentimentality in the spheres of foreign and Imperial policy. It has felt again

and sympathised with the energising thrill of earnestness and practicality which the Government has imparted to the work of social and industrial betterment. In the vast array of legislative measures which Mr. Asquith's colleagues have succeeded in passing there are, indeed, remaıkably few that have not carried with them the emphatic stamp of national approval; and his colleagues themselves, or most of them, have fortified their titles to public confidence with unlooked-for success. And even where Ministers have failed, their failure has not been of that fatal kind that men dismiss, as they dismissed Lord Rosebery, with a shrug of the shoulders. The country is interested in the Government, individually and collectively. There is no sign of the boredom and irritation, still less of the moral nausea, that overwhelmed the last three years of Mr. Balfour's Ministry.

The Government's growing and palpable unpopularity cannot, therefore, as I reason the matter out, be ascribed to this Minister or to that. Still less can it be ascribed to the paralysis of disunion which has afflicted most Liberal Governments in the past. Though harassed at times in the rear by allies who partake a good deal of the nature of guerillas, the Government and the party have maintained an unwonted cohesion and discipline. Of anything resembling a revolt against the official policy there have been next to no serious tokens. Even the candid friend has but rarely and feebly lifted his voice. It is not likely—the contrary, indeed, is notorious—that the Cabinet has been unanimous in all its decisions or that the Navy Estimates, for instance, were agreed upon without a certain amount of contention. But for all parliamentary purposes Mr. Asquith and his colleagues have been sufficiently and even amply in agreement; while the unity, concord and loyal self-sacrifice of the party at large, and of the sections that compose it, are almost without precedent in the annals of Liberalism. If, therefore, the country is turning against the Government it is not because the Government has offered it the excuse of distracted counsels or personal or factional dissensions.

To account at all completely for its decline in favour one must, I think, take into consideration a multitude of causes, some great, some small, some particular and some general. The natural swing of the pendulum, accelerated by the reaction after the prodigious effort of 1906 and by the Government's inordinate, breathless and bewildering energy, is one of them. The people have no appetite for more than one first-class measure at a time. The Government has tried to thrust three or four

down their throats simultaneously. The result is confusion, congestion, repletion and, finally, an instinct of revolt. Again, in the minds of a great many people, particularly of the middle class, the Government has become tainted with Socialism. The middle classes in this country are even more susceptible to scares about property than to scares about Ritualism. I do not say that they are as yet in a state of alarm, still less of panic. But they are fidgety with a vague, but potent, uneasiness, the sort of uneasiness that may lead them, unless it is dispelled, to vote blindly for the Unionists as "the saviours of society." And while the middle classes have been perturbed by the inrush of "predatory" ideas and by the irrepressible metaphors of Mr. Lloyd George, who is extremely clever but not quite clever enough to understand English stupidity, the working classes have been likewise alienated by an all-round increase in the cost of living and by the collapse of the trade boom which, for five years after Mr. Chamberlain launched it, took all the heart out of the movement for Tariff Reform. The Unionist Free Traders, again, who seem to be the only genuine Tories left in the world of British politics, feel that their allegiance has been severely strained by the radicalism of the Government's policy, and complain bitterly that the Liberals have forgotten that they were elected to act as the trustees of Free Trade and are hurrying the country into a multitude of social reforms the mere financing of which will make Protection inevitable. Besides this the commotion that annually recurs both before and after the submission of the Navy Estimates, the presence and activity in Parliament of so many Radicals who appear to set domestic reform before national security, and the revelations of Germany's naval expansion have caused an undoubted disquietude. Mr. Birrell, too, in spite of his University Bill—an achievement for which the full credit has been allowed him neither in England nor in Ireland—can hardly suppose that his administration of Ireland has added either to his own or his party's reputation among the mass of Englishmen. Nor, I think, is it open to question that the Tariff Reformers have made in the last three years considerable headway both in the ranks of the Unionists and in the constituencies. The country, I believe, is still for Free Trade but not so staunchly and so clearly as it was. It has on the whole few misgivings as to the fiscal expediency of a tariff for revenue only; it has considerably more than it has ever had before as to its ability to sustain such a tariff unmodified.

But out-topping this and almost all other causes of the Government's loss of popularity is its campaign against the

House of Lords. By fulmigating against the Upper Chamber and yet remaining in office, by vowing it will stand or fall by this or that measure and yet going on after its rejection as though nothing had happened, by boasting, and quite rightly, of its splendid achievements and yet attempting to rally support for a great Constitutional upheaval on the strength of the wreckage of a few Bills that the country regarded either with active dislike or with tepid unconcern, the Government is rapidly making itself ridiculous. The signs, moreover, are few and faint that the people really desire any fundamental change in the relations between the two Houses. From time to time the House of Lords goes against the best opinion of the country. But taken as a whole it is a remarkably responsive and popular assembly—the most popular and responsive Second Chamber in the world, I believe—and those who wish to destroy its prerogatives for the sake of making the House of Commons supreme are, I am convinced, an insignificant minority; and I am not less convinced that Mr. Asquith's declaration of war at an unspecified time and by unspecified means will not only confuse and devitalise the Government's strategy from now to the dissolution but will alienate thousands who voted for the Liberals in 1906 without winning a single new recruit. It is, of course, possible that the fighting policy disclosed in the Budget will enable the Government to recover some, at all events, of the ground it has lost and to choose a really favourable time for submitting its record to the electorate. But as a general thing I am extremely sceptical of the effects of Budgets upon votes, and at present it looks as though the Liberals were destined to a progressive decline in popularity and effectiveness, and as though even the enormous gravity of a General Election involving a direct mandate for Free Trade or for Protection would not be enough to rally their scattering forces. The country in my judgment is for Free Trade, against Home Rule and against any Constitutional modification of the powers of the House of Lords. What, then, will be the result of an appeal to the country taken by a party that, while for Free Trade, will ask for an unfettered hand in dealing with Ireland and will also seek a mandate to alter the position of the Upper Chamber? Is the reaction from the present Government likely to be so strong as to enable the Unionists in England, Wales and Scotland to win the 170 seats or so necessary to give them a bare plurality over the combined forces of the Liberals, Labour men and Nationalists? I do not believe it. What will probably, what will almost certainly happen, unless the Government makes a miraculous recovery,

is that the result of the next General Election will leave the balance of power once more in the hands of the Irish Nationalists, and that any Government which takes office will be dependent for its very existence on the votes of Mr. Redmond and his followers.

The fact that there exists in the House of Commons a compact, disciplined and indestructible group of some eighty members, whose politics are purely opportunist, who are open to an alliance with any party but prefer one with the party that controls the House of Lords and whose instincts are all on the side of Tariff Reform, is on the whole the most important and the least mentioned fact in British politics. It has, however, of late been receiving some, though by no means all, of the attention it deserves and will one day inexorably command. It was, for instance, referred to or rather hinted at in the debates on the Address. The official Tariff Reform amendment regretted the absence from the King's Speech of "any proposals for enlarging the market for British *and Irish* produce." This is, I believe, the first time that Ireland's supposed interest in the fiscal question has been officially recognised and pandered to. That it was done inadvertently or without political intention I find it difficult to believe; and Mr. Redmond, as usual, was prompt to mark its significance and to let it be known that if the Unionists would help him to an extension of Irish self-government, he would help them to Tariff Reform. The suggestion that any such bargain could possibly be struck was vigorously repudiated, first, by Lord Robert Cecil, who, however, admitted that "a very small section of Tariff Reformers" were not averse from it, and, secondly, by Mr. Balfour, who roundly declared that "if any party or group in that House supposed for a moment that the policy of the party to which he had the honour to belong was going to be modified in the smallest degree by what they thought Irish votes were going to do for that party, they were greatly mistaken." In saying this, Mr. Balfour was repeating in other words his declaration of October 3, 1904: "I am given to understand that the leader of the Irish party, of the Home Rule party, is giving wide currency in America to the view that the Irish party in the House of Commons is, after the next election, going to hold the balance between the two great historical parties into which we of the United Kingdom have been divided, and that by holding that balance he can exact from one or other of the contending factions the terms which may suit him and his friends. So far as I am concerned, so far as my colleagues are concerned, so far as the party with which

I am connected is concerned, no such bargaining can, or ever will, take place. They may make what propositions they like, they may make what terms they choose with our political opponents; we, gentlemen, are not for sale." Emphatic words, and received, I need hardly add, with rapturous cheers by the audience, and with hardly less satisfaction by the stalwarts of Ulster; but I wonder what Walpole, that supreme embodiment of political common sense who advised his young men not to use the word "never," would have thought of them. As the Prime Minister aptly reminded him when Mr. Balfour renewed his protestations a few weeks ago: "It is easy to rise superior to the temptations of to-morrow."

But it is not only in Parliament that the relations between the Unionist and the Nationalist parties and of both to Tariff Reform have been the subject of discussion. The *Morning Post* has long been conspicuous for the ardour with which it has laid stress on the advantages to Irish agriculture of preferential treatment in the English market, and Mr. Hewins early in February delivered an address in Dublin on the same tempting theme, an address that drew from Mr. Kettle the remark that "for them as Nationalists he thought it might be extremely good political business at present to go in for a flirtation with the Tariff Reform party." In Ireland itself the fiscal question has been curiously little debated and it is only now that the share Ireland may have in settling it and its bearing upon Irish interests are beginning to be realised. There is no enthusiasm for Tariff Reform on the other side of the Channel. Few Irishmen believe that the British democracy will accept it and not many are convinced that Ireland stands to gain by it. But to the suggestion of a political "deal" Irish ears are always open, and of all "deals" one with the Tariff Reformers makes at once the most startling and the most insinuating appeal. Is such a "deal" a possibility of the future? The *Observer* and the *Spectator* have lately been threshing the subject out, and both conclude that the Union is above Free Trade and above Protection. "Tariff Reformers," said the *Observer* on February 14, "will never barter the Union for Tariff Reform; they will never take office in dependence on the Nationalist vote; and they would resist to the last that inconceivably gross bargain if any man should ever be found at once mad enough and bad enough to propose it." The *Spectator* received this disclaimer with great joy and at once entered into similarly wholesale recognisances on behalf of the Unionist Free Traders. There would seem, therefore, to be nothing more to be said. But I confess

myself both a little sceptical and a little contemptuous of such rhetorical abnegation as the *Observer* displays. In the first place, as I shall endeavour to show later on, there is no question of "bartering the Union." In the second place, while it is a perfectly arguable proposition that Tariff Reform of some kind is an inevitability of the future and that whatever party is in power the country will ultimately be driven to it by the pressure of financial necessity, politicians who are devoted to a great cause are not as a rule content to leave it either to the future or to their opponents to carry it, least of all when an immediate victory is within their own grasp. That the great bulk of the Unionists are devoted to Tariff Reform is evident. That Tariff Reform in any future within the bounds of rational political calculation can only be carried, as nearly all the decisive measures in British politics during the past eighty years have been carried, by the Irish vote is, to me at least, not less evident. Are we then to suppose that the Unionists will consent to wander indefinitely in the wilderness and to forego the prosecution of their most cherished policies rather than come to terms with Mr. Redmond and his followers? Is this practical politics? Is it common sense? Is it statesmanship? I am well aware of all that would be said against such an understanding, of how the Liberals would denounce it as an infamous deal, of how the Unionists would feel it involved a loss of principle and self-respect. But for one thing I question whether the old rigidity of party lines and party professions can be much longer maintained amid the rivalries of opportunist groups into which English politics are resolving themselves. For another, a party which adopts a policy as the first constructive plank in its platform, that intensely believes in it and intensely longs to give effect to it, is bound to use all honourable means to translate it into legislation. For a third, it can, I think, be demonstrated that a compact between the Tariff Reformers and the Nationalists is not only consistent with the honour of the Unionist party but is essential to the welfare of Ireland. To suggest such a compact as a mere party manœuvre to dish the Liberals and carry Tariff Reform is, I quite agree, to revive the least savoury methods of eighteenth-century politics. But to suggest it not as a measure of self-interest alone but as a proper and opportune development of Unionist policy in Ireland is to lift it to a plane where it may be accepted not only with a good conscience but in full conviction of its statesmanship.

One thing may be said at once. If there are any Unionists, as Lord Robert Cecil declared there are, who look forward to a

working alliance with the Nationalists simply as an expedient for passing Tariff Reform, and who think that Tariff Reform is enough in itself to cement that alliance and that the Nationalists will be satisfied to vote with the Unionists in return for certain facilities and privileges granted to Irish bacon, eggs and live-stock, they will not only be disappointed but they will deserve to be disappointed. Mr. Kettle on February 18 very properly reminded the House that he and his friends would "decline to interest themselves in economic controversies except upon the basis of some sort of real control over their destinies." The question for Unionists to consider is whether there is anything in their principles or their past that precludes them from giving the Irish "some sort of real control over their destinies." I think it can be shown that not only does no such impediment exist, but that the time has come for granting a further instalment of self-government and that it is from Unionist hands that the gift would be most welcome, appropriate and effective. What has been the history of British rule in Ireland during the past hundred years? It has been the history of the downfall of a clique and of the transference of its powers and privileges to the body of the people. The repeal of the Penal Laws, Catholic emancipation, the abolition of tithes, the disestablishment of the Irish Church, the extension of the franchise, the grant of local government and, finally, the Wyndham Act of 1903, are the successive stages in a revolution as irresistible as any in history. To this revolution the English Unionists have contributed their full share. It was they who gave local government, it was they who decreed the destruction of the last citadel of the Ascendency party—their hold on the land. Unionism as a policy of mere negation is played out and has been abandoned. It has ceased to be a synonym for resistance and coercion; it has broadened into a mellower and more tolerant creed and, above all, into a programme of constructive amelioration; it has assimilated, in part at any rate, what has always seemed to me the plainest of the innumerable lessons to be learned from Irish history—that until the majority of the people feel that they have in a measure a shaping hand in their own government, until they are made conscious of a harmony between Irish sentiment, instincts and responsibility and the daily work of Irish administration, the country will never be contented. A party which has thus recognised the fact of the historical consciousness of the Irish people, which has given them as large a share of domestic autonomy in purely local matters as the English or the Scotch possess, and which has pledged the

Imperial credit in a sum of nearly £200,000,000 to enable them to purchase their holdings, is a party that can scarcely at this day pretend it is morally debarred from granting the Irish "some sort of real control over their destinies."

I repeat, there is and can be no question of "bartering the Union." Unionists who have passed a measure that they declared to be "worse than Home Rule" and have seen their venturesomeness triumphantly vindicated, should have learned by this time the folly of such phrases. Not a single blow has been dealt at the Ascendency party in the past century, not a step has been taken towards the equalisation of the two "races" and the two creeds and towards the conversion of Irish government from an exclusive preserve of a faction into the common property of all the people, that has not been opposed as an act of treachery to the Union. If such fantastic bogeys are now to block the path, then the bankruptcy of Unionism may as well be publicly proclaimed. As a matter of fact, any one with an eye for the verities of the Irish situation will see that if Unionists have the courage and enlightenment to grasp it, a chance of unique and beneficent possibilities is opening before them. Ireland is in a phase of anxious transition. Landlordism is disappearing; a new sense of nationality and interdependence is being evolved; there is an approximation of all Irishmen towards a common centre; the Irish mind has taken a sudden turn of practicality; and the dissatisfaction with the present system of government is almost as extreme among Irish Unionists as among Irish Nationalists. Devolution, let us always remember, both in its spirit and its inception, was essentially a Unionist policy. It marked the existence in Ireland of a body of Unionists who have become alive to the expensive inadequacies of the Irish form of government, who realise its lack of responsiveness to the needs and sentiments of the people, who diagnose the Irish situation as offering a choice between immediate upbuilding and rapid decline, who proclaim aloud the fact that there is such a thing as a genuine and distinctive Irish nationality, and who have broken loose from the prejudices of their class and environment and are groping their way towards a policy which, without being Home Rule, will go some way towards satisfying the Irish sense of a national consciousness and will unite all Irishmen on a non-partisan and non-sectarian platform of internal betterment. Under one organisation or another, as members of the Irish Reform Association, or as Devolutionists or as Imperial Home Rulers, these men are building up a body of moderate opinion, and are organising Irish sentiment against the con-

tinuance of many tangible and recognised abuses. They do not perhaps go so far as Mr. Chamberlain was willing to go, but I do not think they would object to setting up in Dublin a statutory body for controlling all purely Irish expenditure and the whole range of private Bill legislation for Ireland. This was essentially the sort of advance that Mr. Wyndham was meditating when the Ulster attacks on his "rotten, sickening policy of conciliation" brought him low; and the Unionists may before long have to decide whether their Irish policy ought not to be taken up at the point at which Mr. Wyndham was forced to drop it. I think emphatically it ought, and that English Unionists could do nothing worse than to take their cue on Irish affairs from the Ulster extremists. If it be said that Ireland has already rejected Devolution, the reply is that the Irish Nationalists will accept with gratitude from the Unionists what they will refuse from the Liberals. I do not mean that a measure of Devolution should be the sum total of the Unionists' Irish policy. They will have to facilitate the workings of land purchase; they will have to forward in every way the magnificent work of agricultural betterment inaugurated by Sir Horace Plunkett; and they will have to do what they can to check the lawlessness and demoralisation that are flourishing under Mr. Birrell's rule. But above all, they will have to wipe out the memory of Mr. Walter Long's unhappy administration and revert to the finer spirit and the more statesman-like impulses and principles of the Wyndham period.

On Licensing

By H. Belloc

Last year the Government introduced a Licensing Bill which was in reality two Bills; not that it consisted of two sets of clauses easily separable the one from the other, but that it was so drawn as to satisfy two demands differing wholly one from the other in principle, and proceeding generally from two very different kinds of opinion.

The first demand was for the restriction and public control of a very powerful and highly limited economic interest which had achieved a quasi-monopoly in one of the necessaries of life.

The other demand was a demand for the restriction of the sale of fermented liquors: the diminution of their consumption, and in general the hampering by public authority of their habitual use.

That Bill was defeated; and it is characteristic of the time in which we live that it was defeated not by the popular detestation of its restrictive clauses where they regarded the consumption of fermented liquor, but by the avarice of those who were determined to maintain the grip which a handful of wealthy men had established over this particular trade.

A short Bill destroying the tied-house system, putting into democratic hands the power of increasing or decreasing the licenses of a district, and rigorously punishing adulteration, would have been as popular a measure as the Government could have brought forward.

The restrictions upon the general habit of the nation—restrictions carefully withheld from the popular vote and put into the hands of the wealthy governing class which administrates as it makes the laws—were intensely and deservedly unpopular.

If it be asked what motive force underlay the production of so unpopular a measure the answer is very simple; that motive force was subscription to the secret party funds. It is the principal force in politics, and until that organisation with all its accessories—the sale of permanent legislative power in the Upper House, the sale of lesser honours, the overbalancing influence of wealth over the Executive, and the rest—is made public and through publicity destroyed, Bills and administrative

Acts of the Executive will continue to astonish, because those Bills and those Acts are so clearly divorced from public opinion.

It is improbable that another attempt of the same sort will be made so far as direct legislation is concerned. The Budget afforded an opportunity for the reiteration of one or the other or both of these policies. It was within the power of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to put an end to the tied-house system by one single feature introduced into his new taxation and by extra taxation of immature spirits to discourage their sale. The Chancellor of the Exchequer had his opportunity: he knew it: but the party system proved too strong for him and he has let it go by. It is still in the power of the Administration at any moment to bring in a short Bill defining the materials from which the staple fermented liquors of the people shall be made, the minimum age at which certain of them should be sold, and punishing any attempt to adulterate them in manufacture or to offer to sell them in immaturity, precisely as we now punish the adulteration or offer for sale, under improper conditions, of other articles of food. The Administration will not move.

It is well in this, as in every other controversy, to state clearly at the head of the discussion those points that are common to every aspect of the question, and those first principles which underlie various methods of dealing with it.

Now it must be common to all sane and informed opinion upon this matter, first, that the use of fermented liquors has been universal in our civilisation from all time. It has entered into all our habits, it is taken for granted throughout all our literature and all our folk-lore, and it penetrates to the very centre of our religion. It is as useless to deny this as it is to quote in connection with it historical exceptions to be discovered among other races. As well might a man, considering whether some physical action would be to his physical good or hurt, neglect the advice of a doctor who had known all his habits throughout his life, and prefer to copy a stranger of utterly different temperament, blood, and environment to his own. The power of this first unquestioned truth is sometimes lessened, as is that of other analogous permanent historical truths, by the citation of habits once common to a civilisation and later abandoned. Thus men convinced of the iniquity of monogamy or of private ownership of land will cite the case of slavery, once universal and taken for granted, now forgotten. Or the case of certain cruelties once covered by the law and now thought detestable, in their argument against marriage or property.

But certainly the weight of a historical statement of this

sort is the greater in proportion as is the length of the period to which one can appeal, the universality of the practice and even its contemporary strength. There are, indeed, not a few examples of things ancient and universal, yet admittedly vicious ; but the use of fermented liquors certainly does not come under this heading. No body of thought in our civilisation has for any appreciable period, or with an appreciable weight of opinion behind it, during a very long historic past, condemned the use of fermented liquors.

There, then, is a first point quite clear, and one which presumably no one on any side of this controversy would deny.

There is a second point equally clear, equally furnished with ample historical evidence, and surely accepted with equal universality : which is, that of all forms of food common in our civilisation, fermented liquors may most readily lead to the gravest abuse ; and this abuse has the further characteristic that it comes at once stealthily and rapidly. Tea or coffee may be bad for our race, and in excess each certainly is so ; but neither presents, as it were, a sudden bend in the curve of habit distinguishing moderate from immoderate use. There is no precipice in the use of such things over which the ordinary person may fall. It is the characteristic of fermented liquors that, while they are regarded by the great mass of men as ordinary and natural articles of food, they are also known, after a certain limit, to become extraordinary and unnatural agents, destructive to the individual, and in certain, though very exceptional, cases dangerous to all society.

Most drugs as we know them, be they as mild as tobacco, or as violent as opium, lie, again, in another category. For whether they are mild or violent, they cannot pretend to be an ordinary article of consumption entering permanently and naturally into the nourishment of our civilisation ; and whether they be mild or violent, their effect is more or less proportionate to their use.

At the root of the problem then lie these two truths : first, that the use of certain fermented liquors as a food is immemorial in our society and bound up with every part of it. Secondly, that more than any other form of food it exposes men to an abrupt peril.

Having stated the two main truths in connection with the question, it may be well to review one or two of the principal falsehoods which have risen in a thick fungoid mass round this discussion. They are of recent growth and will probably prove ephemeral, but they are none the less offensive and dangerous to our moment. The first falsehood is that men who

drink wine and beer " crave alcohol." Alcohol is an abstraction of chemical science. Used in this sense it means a definable body entering into all fermented liquids and capable of producing certain physical effects which those fermented liquids, since they contain it, must also in some degree produce. To say that men who habitually drink wine or beer crave this chemical substance and its effects, is false ; and the falsehood is of a falsity peculiar to the time in which we live with its pseudo-scientific jargon, and its divorce from reality. A man who drinks wine or beer wants wine or beer to drink, not alcohol. It is true that, if you took away the alcohol from the wine or the beer, he would not find it palatable, but it is twenty times more true that if you took away whatever else is in wine and beer and gave him the alcohol alone, he would find it detestable. There is nothing commoner than to find a man who will habitually drink claret and yet detests Rhine wine. You will hardly make a man from Marseilles drink English beer or a man from Nottingham exceed upon Barsac ; at least, a man of the people : the rich are cosmopolitan. Obviously, apparently and ludicrously false as this statement with regard to alcohol is, none is more frequently repeated, and from none are deductions more commonly drawn. Doctors, especially, love to quote pathological cases and argue from them to the normal. The normal case is within the experience of all of us ; it is repeated a million times upon every side throughout Europe. Some particular type of fermented liquor, at the most one or two types, are customarily taken as a food by the people of a district and nothing else will do for the people of that district, and " alcohol " is no more the essential part of the beer than opening the mouth is an essential part of national singing. A Spaniard cannot sing a Spanish song without opening his mouth, and an Irishman cannot sing an Irish song without opening his mouth. But what makes each man sing and each man sing differently is something a great deal more than the desire to open the mouth and to bellow.

Another falsehood, and one very commonly repeated in connection with the consumption of fermented liquors, and equally susceptible to the test of repeated and daily experience, is the statement that fermented liquors deteriorate physical and mental power. Sometimes this falsehood is qualified by the phrase " save in very small quantities," and there are even scientists run mad who will measure the exact quantity after which the deterioration begins. Greater nonsense was never talked. All the good fighting, the good writing, the good building, and the good speaking has been done by men who drank wine or beer exactly as they ate bread and meat. You can laboriously collect examples

of individual men and even of exceptional races who have done great things upon a peculiar *régime*, whether of abstinence from fermented liquor or of abstinence from meat or of abstinence from any other human thing. But the conception that wine and beer deteriorate mental and physical power—that "Paradise Lost" for instance, would have been a slightly better poem if Milton had been a water drinker, or that the Grand Army on its way from Boulogne to Austerlitz would have marched a trifle better if it had been teetotal, is so mad that surely it could never have received a moment's attention in any age but ours.

A third falsehood which has recently arisen in connection with this subject is the fantastic one that the type of liquid consumed is immaterial. It is taken for granted in a certain kind of discussion that wine, beer, and spirits are in themselves so evil, that whether they be made in one way or another, whether they be adulterated or pure, mature or immature, is indifferent to the consumer. It is difficult, in marshalling statements of this kind, to be certain which is the most extravagant, but perhaps the palm ought to be given to this last. Something which would be thought quite meaningless if it were affirmed of any other kind of food is solemnly accepted with regard to one particular kind against the evidence of the palate, the stomach, the brain, and the whole condition of a man. Chemists solemnly analyse some undrinkable stuff which the master who has paid them desires to put upon the market, they assure the reformer that the stuff they have analysed is identical with some other thing which looks different, tastes different and has a very different effect upon the digestion, and the reformer swallows evidence of that sort against the evidence of his senses.

There are many other falsehoods which have arisen round the body of the debate, as that the drunkenness of a people is in proportion to the amount of fermented liquor consumed per head; that it is in proportion to the amount of alcohol contained in that fermented liquor; that the economic energy expended in the production of this form of food is in the economic sense wasted; that the habit of consuming fermented liquors is one of its nature tending to increase in the individual and in a society, and so forth. But if one were to attempt a full list of all the absurdities which fanaticism has produced in this connection, the task would be as purposeless as it would be fatiguing. It is rather our business to discover what just rules apply to the sale and consumption of articles whose characteristics we have described than to discuss hypotheses which have no relation to life.

Those characteristics, as we have seen, are, first, that their use

is constant and normal; secondly, that their abuse, whether from excess, immaturity or adulteration, is highly dangerous and is divided from their use by a narrow and perilous margin.

These two general truths must be the basis of any reasonable discussion of the question.

Now let us turn from them to the actual conditions which we see around us. We shall discover in those conditions the origin of many of the absurdities that we have hitherto been criticising.

Take, for instance, the point that the number of licensed premises bears some direct relation to the degradation of a community through its excess in the consumption of fermented liquors. There is a particular social state in modern Europe to which this rule does apply. It is an exception and a nasty exception, probably an ephemeral exception, but for the moment it is there. It is the social state of the very poorest quarters of the great English towns.

There would be no purpose served if an attempt were made in these pages to discover why the poorer quarters of our English towns had been allowed to get into a condition which makes them and their owners a by-word throughout the civilised world. Nor should it concern us particularly by what degradation of the will and by what utter loss of manhood the mere mechanical repetition of temptation can produce such effects in a society evidently drugged.

These are fundamental questions of quite another scope than those proposed in this discussion : they concern evils not to be cured by legislation, and, perhaps, incurable by any agency less drastic than that of war.

But just as it is true that in the more degraded parts of our society the number of licensed premises does bear some relation, though not a direct relation, to the evils which follow excess in drinking, so it is true that outside that sphere they bear no relation to it whatsoever. The wealthier classes—who are by no means the less drunken of the community—are the sole designers and the sole administrators of the law in this country : for our society to-day is almost by definition a plutocracy.

The drunkenness of the wealthy class (which makes and administers the laws) bears no relation whatsoever to the number of licensed premises ; it is universally to their advantage that there should be in the neighbourhood of their dwellings as few licensed premises as possible. These places attract the populace : they are the natural meeting-place of the populace, and the presence of the populace in considerable numbers is intolerable to the members of an isolated wealthy class. Their own vices stand utterly apart from any such temptations. The drunken

rich drink mainly in each other's houses, more in a dozen absurd hotels, and to some extent, though far less, at their clubs.

To the middle classes of the community in which, of course, I include the well-paid artisans and their representatives in Parliament, very nearly the same rule applies ; they are far less drunken than their social superiors, nay, a very considerable proportion of the skilled artisans, the small tradesmen, and the less well-to-do members of the professions happen, in our particular phase of opinion, to be ignorant of the use of fermented liquors, and even, in some odd religious way, to fear that use. But certainly in a street inhabited by men who obtain good wages in some skilled trade, or in a street inhabited by men who keep one shop, or who are struggling doctors, or small lawyers (these streets are usually in the suburbs of a great town) the presence of a public-house is even more of a nuisance than it is in a street inhabited by the rich.

These truths are plain truths ; they must be admitted openly or secretly by every one who hears them stated. They lead, it would seem, to a fairly clear conclusion, which is that we have in our society as it is at present constituted two exceptional types of inhabited areas to which exceptional rules regarding licensing should apply. The first are those areas in which an overwhelming majority—sometimes almost a unanimity of the inhabitants—desire to have as few licensed premises as possible, with the exception, perhaps, of a certain number of hotels ; the second, areas in which the multiplicity of licensed premises is to common knowledge a serious social danger. As to the first of these, exceptional though they are, they would seem to need no exceptional legislation in their favour. The existing powers for the granting or withholding of a license lie mainly in the hands of the very class which inhabit such areas. This is specially true with regard to the new suburban districts, and if any one doubts it let him contrast the number of public-houses which he will find in any particular part of such a district which he shall map out, with the number which he will find in a similar area less particularly devoted to one type of inhabitant. What are somewhat ironically called "the residential districts" can, roughly speaking, look after themselves. They do not create a public demand for a public-house ; it would be bad business on the part of the investor to multiply licenses in such a neighbourhood, and as a fact such multiplication does not take place. As for the odious suggestion that because the mass of people in such a district do not happen to need a public-house or to use one, therefore none of their fellow citizens who may desire to use one shall be allowed that convenience, it is too fantastic to be capable of

serious argument. Unless England is to be split up into a quantity of autonomous republics, each with its little tyrannous majority, the thing would, in practice, be absurd; and of all countries in Europe, England, with its dense population and with its immense activity of travel, is the least suited to such hare-brained experiments.

With regard to the second class of areas, the case is very different. There the multiplying of public-houses is not due to a direct demand which such a multiplicity supplies; it is not the direct product of local opinion; it is the deliberate act of a comparatively small number of wealthy men who know that by investments of this sort they can profit by the weaknesses of the very poor. There is but one way of dealing with the evil: it is to nominate commissions, municipal or, much better, dependent upon the Central Government, whose business it should be to study such areas minutely, to decide what proportion of licenses should disappear, and, what is more important, what situations those remaining should occupy. The recommendations of such commissions, which would be impartial in proportion to their connection with and their control by the Central Government, should be acted upon, and acted upon not gradually but at once. But it would be impossible to undertake a drastic policy of this kind in the present condition of the trade, and that leads me to the second patent truth in connection with this question. That truth is that the creation of the tied-house system and the subjection to it of much more than nine out of ten of the licensed premises in this country is a necessary bar to all useful reform.

I do not here speak of the grave economic evil which it argues; the destruction of small capital, the economic waste attendant on the formation and maintenance of such a monopoly and the enormous power it gives to one small section of the community. In no properly constituted society would such a monopoly have been permitted to arise. It smells rather of the new countries with their wild and anarchic experiments, and their continual, their often irreparable, errors of political judgment, than of sane European tradition. It is a thing which at its very outset should have been cut down by law. As it is, we have permitted it to flourish, and until we uproot it it will continue to form a bar as effectual to reform in the matter of licensing as the land monopoly is at present a bar to reform in land tenure. The Small Holdings Act has failed or is failing, because much stronger than the printed words of any document is the social fact of the great estates with their grip upon the political life of an English county and their domination of its councils. In the same way there is no conceivable

reform of licensing that can be put into working shape, and can effect anything useful, until the novel monopoly created quite recently by a small group of capitalists is dispersed. No matter what recommendation is made or what course of legislation suggested, you will always have attendant upon every licensing problem the three impediments inherent to the tied-house system. You will always have the demand for abnormal "compensation" to be paid to the wealthy, and the wealthy will see that that demand is gratified. You will always have the power of the State face to face not with private citizens, numerous and manageable, but with great organised corporations; and you will always have the power of those corporations to juggle with values. A group of great breweries could, if they knew that a particular area was going to be marked for reform, concentrate their efforts upon that area, and affect values in it almost at their pleasure.

There are but two ways of destroying an anti-social monopoly when it has once taken root.

The first is to transform it into a department of the State; the second is by legislation to make it more worth while for the small man than for the large man to buy. Graduate taxation so that it shall fall more and more heavily in proportion to the number of licensed premises held under one control, and immediately the tendency will be for the monopolist to sell to the small individual investor. There is no other solution to the problem, and that solution, if its action be reasonably deferred, with fair warning, for a certain number of years, will be as thorough as it is equitable.

Meanwhile, although nothing can be done on the point of licensing alone while the tied-house system still endures, something of the most immediate and practical use can be done in the cause of the public health, and especially the health of the poor. And that is the introduction of legislation which shall define the nature of the materials tolerated in the production of certain specified fermented liquors which are the staples of public consumption, and shall punish any adulteration precisely as the adulteration of other foods is punished now, to which might be added a provision that spirits should not be offered for sale until they had attained a certain legal minimum of maturity.

Behind reforms of this sort there would be what is rare enough in the case of good legislation, a strong public opinion, and until that type of reform is undertaken the whole Licensing Question will become more and more complex with every year until, perhaps in the near future, its problems will be declared, as we have come to declare the most part of our problems, insoluble.

John Millington Synge

By F. Norreys Connell

It is very certain that Synge is dead, and I have seen the dividing earth close in upon his grave, yet he remains to me rather as one I have not met in the flesh than as a mere memory.

There is nothing unaccountable in this; for Synge was a true man of letters, and the man of letters cannot die while that which he has written remains and may find readers. The dust of the Valois kings is strewn with their loves and their rivals, but Ronsard is singing still, and outlawed Villon has lived down the law. Synge was a Protestant, not merely a protestant against Romanism, but even more against that Protestantism which is Judaism with the intellectuality ignored, and is based upon what might be a police magistrate's interpretation of the Ten Commandments. And not only was Synge's work directly a protest against that spirituality which conceived Providence as the father of ugliness, but also it was a protest against the artist's implacable foe—Oblivion. To the present writer it seems that this protest, not loud but clear ringing, will wake echo in the hearts of many generations, for it is tuned in a note having no like, yet seeking its fellow.

This man was a dramatist, and I think it is William Butler Yeats we must thank for turning his energies in that direction, as we must thank Miss A. E. F. Horniman for providing the scene and means by which these energies took effect. But for a chance meeting with Yeats in Paris, Synge might never have written a play; but for Miss Horniman's quixotic generosity in financing the National Theatre Society of Ireland and installing them at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, Synge's plays (if written at all) could never in his lifetime have become known to more than a very few people capable of appreciating them.

These plays are few in number, but far-reaching in effect; they tend rather towards tragedy than comedy, but all strike the middle note of drama: the rebellion of men and women against the futility of themselves. The tinker's trull has a hankering to be churched; the old farmer's wife sighs for passionate kisses, though she take them in the ditch; the blind beggar cured, has no eyes but for Aphrodite; the simpleton filches an

hour of glory on the unfounded claim of being a parricide ; they that ride to win their bread from the waters are drowned. Synge's world is no whitewashed sepulchre but a glorious mausoleum of illusions where men go down with dignity to death, solaced with the music of words bearing thoughts that are bitter sweet, the laughter of the gods rolling behind the clouds on the hill.

" On the stage," said he, in the preface to *The Playboy of the Western World*, which many think his finest work—" On the stage one must have reality, and one must have joy." In this play, which is comedy bordering upon tragic farce, we have joy, pure joy—the joy of a child's dream of chivalry. The maltreated son of a drunken beast of a farmer reaches adolescence and dreams romance. When his father bids him marry his foster-mother, his soul revolts, and he suddenly finds courage to knock the old blackguard to earth with a tap of his log : " I just riz the log and let fall the edge of it on the ridge of his skull," he explains, " and he went down at my feet like an empty sack, and never let a grunt or groan from him at all." The boy, who has never before seen his father quiet save when asleep, conceives himself to be a murderer, above all a parricide ; naturally timid, he is overcome with fear and flees up into the hills. Dark night and exhaustion force him to take shelter in a shebeen where the landlord is wanting a potboy to help his daughter while he himself goes to a wake. The new-comer tells his story to astonished ears and the landlord, having satisfied himself that the youth's criminality is fully homicidal, takes him into his service at once, for it is evident that a man who was not afraid to kill his own father would be a paladin among potboys. So the abashed youth who has borrowed the murderer's panache is left to guard the daughter of the house while the publican goes off to the wake. And thus begins one of the finest love-comedies in the English language, one with this passage in it :

Says the girl to the lad : " What call have you to be that lonesome when there's poor girls walking Mayo in their thousands now ? " And he answers : " It's well you know what call I have. It's well you know it's a lonesome thing to be passing small towns with the lights shining sideways when the night is down, or going in strange places with a dog noising before you, and a dog noising behind, or drawn to the cities where you'd hear a voice kissing and talking deep love in every shadow of the ditch, and you passing on with an empty, hungry stomach failing from your heart."

And again she says : " Would you have me think a man never

talked with the girls would have the words you've spoken to-day ? It's only letting on you are to be lonesome, the way you'd get around me now." And he answers : " I wish to God I was letting on ; but I was lonesome all times, and born lonesome, I'm thinking, as the moon of dawn."

As he offers to go, she seeks to stay him : " Well, it's a story I'm not understanding at all why you'd be worse than another, Christy Mahon, and you a fine lad with the great savagery to destroy your da." And he answers with the overwhelming passion of young blind love : " It's little I'm understanding myself, saving only that my heart's scalded this day, and I going off stretching out the earth between us, the way I'll not be waking near you another dawn of the year till the two of us do arise to hope or judgment with the saints of God. . . ." And yet in the end, after he has been made ridiculous by the discovery that his father was not killed after all, a ridicule from which he cannot save himself by attempting again to kill him : for when she sees the thing with her own eyes the girl shrinks from him in horror ; the curtain falls to a full rich note of irony as the coward turned hero goes off with the old bullying father cringing behind him and the girl crying when too late : " Oh, my grief, I've lost him surely. I've lost the only playboy of the Western World."

When this play was originally produced in Dublin a certain section of the audience found its naturalism too robust for them, but time's revenge has not been slowly taken, and, if not they, certainly their children will learn that whatever its faults may be, this is a classic.

A classic, too, is *The Well of the Saints*, the story of the blind beggars who preferred the world they saw in their minds' eyes to that the Saint's miracle showed them. When the Saint declares : " I never heard tell of any person wouldn't have great joy to be looking on the earth, and the image of the Lord thrown upon men," the blind man raises his voice to answer : " Them is great sights, holy father. . . . What was it I seen when I just opened my eyes, but your own bleeding feet, and they cut with the stones ? That was a great sight maybe of the image of God. . . . And what was it I seen my last day but the villainy of hell looking out from the eyes of the girl you're coming to marry—the Lord forgive you—with Timmy the smith. That was a great sight, maybe. And wasn't it great sights I seen on the roads when the north winds would be driving, and the skies would be harsh, till you'd see the horses and the asses, and the dogs themselves, maybe, with their heads hanging, and they closing their eyes——"

With *The Well of the Saints* may rank the slighter but almost equally strong play *In the Shadow of the Glen*, which treats of a young woman turned out of doors by a selfish old husband, and going off with a tramp who, if he cannot give her a soft bed, at least can give her soft words. Both these plays have been produced with considerable measure of success upon the Continent : they have never, however, proved very popular with English-speaking audiences, who prefer the more obvious and conventional sentiment of *Riders to the Sea*. This little tragedy has all the beauty we associate with the earlier paintings of Jozef Israels, but I confess that its intellectual appeal seems to me weaker than that of the other plays. To go further—I find Synge himself in the playboy, I find him in the tramp and in the blind beggar ; I do not find him in the slightly sketched fisherman who rides to his death.

About the time he was engaged on *In the Shadow of the Glen* (produced in the autumn of 1903) and *Riders to the Sea* (spring, 1904), Synge wrote another somewhat longer comedy, *The Tinker's Wedding*, which he revised and published in book form in 1907. This has never been considered by the directors of the National Theatre Society to be suitable for production, and, in my own opinion, despite certain beauties here and there, it is not a good play, nor even a faultless piece of literature. Indeed I am tempted to call it his one failure as a dramatist, though it is well worth reading, particularly the first act. In the last the beauty of the language is lost in the sinister ugliness of sheer farce.

One play remains, the play which a dying hand failed an undying mind to finish as it should be, but a play so infused with the genius of its maker that when it is presented to the public, as it will be in the autumn of the present year, we who have read and pondered it hope and believe that it shall carry Synge's name yet higher up the hill of fame.

Synge loved fame : but he loved it nobly, seeking it with the ardour of one who is at once a gentleman and a philosopher, knowing that the light-come laurels lightly go. He fought relentlessly but joyously for fame and I think he did not more than a moment give ground to despair when they met in the valley of the shadow.

This he wrote within sound of the waters of death :

After reading the Dates in a Book of Lyrics

With Fifteen-ninety or Sixteen-sixteen
We end Cervantes, Marot, Nashe or Greene :
Then Sixteen-thirteen till two score and nine,
Is Crashaw's niche, that honey-lipped divine.

And so when all my little work is done
They'll say I came in Eighteen-seventy-one,
And died in Dublin. . . . What year will they write
For my poor passage to the stall of Night ? *

Certain it is, that in the history of literature, Synge's dates also shall be red-lettered with the rest; for he was a great writer. Admirably as his dramatic works are interpreted by the young actors of the Abbey Company—better, I think, than they could be played by any who had not been rehearsed in his presence—it is needless to say that the splendour of his literary genius can best be judged by them who have read his plays and not merely visualised them through the medium of other minds.

* I am indebted to the courtesy of the proprietors of the Cuala Press for permission to quote this poem, which will be found in a posthumous volume of Mr. Synge's verses now at press.

Le Roman français contemporain

Par Camille Mauclair

I

Il semble que, depuis la grande époque du roman naturaliste ou psychologique, l'activité brillante de ce genre ne se soit pas ralentie en France, si l'on s'en tient à consulter les revues, les journaux, et les vitrines des librairies. Un nombre considérable de romans paraissent chaque année. Et cependant, si l'on n'envisage que l'intérêt véritable des lettres, on est conduit à constater que, malgré cette production énorme et peut-être à cause d'elle, le roman subit en ce moment une grande crise, et traverse une période d'irrésolution et de fatigue.

Il y a à cela des raisons de divers ordres. Les unes tiennent à la littérature elle-même, les autres aux conditions de la vie littéraire en France : et de ces dernières il sera bon de dire quelques mots à un public anglais qui ne peut les soupçonner qu'imparfaitement.

Les mœurs détestables de l'arrivisme ont malheureusement trop envahi les milieux littéraires pour que le double désir du succès et de l'argent n'engage pas la plupart des romanciers à se tourner vers le théâtre. Tous convoitent cette source de gloire et de profit, et il n'est pas un de nos romanciers professionnels les plus connus qui, tôt ou tard, ne cherche à s'improviser auteur dramatique. La concurrence du roman réduit en effet beaucoup la part de bénéfice des écrivains de livres : un roman demande beaucoup plus de travail qu'une pièce et rapporte beaucoup moins, à réussite égale. Le succès scénique donne une notoriété bien plus rapide. Comme, d'autre part, la critique littéraire n'existe à peu près plus en France, étant tuée par le honteux système de la publicité payée, l'écrivain ne peut plus trouver qu'au théâtre une critique qui se marchande, elle aussi, mais est du moins forcée de commenter tout ce qui se joue.

C'est pourquoi chacun cherche à donner à ses sujets la forme théâtrale, et pourquoi même ceux qui ne se sentent pas d'aptitudes dramatiques tentent d'extraire de leurs romans des versions scéniques. Enfin, le public est de moins en moins disposé à lire patiemment trois ou quatre cents pages de psychologie.

Il n'en a ni le temps ni le désir, alors qu'il peut se divertir d'un conte ou d'une soirée au théâtre. Le roman sérieux, écrit avec art et profondément composé et pensé, exige de l'auteur un effort que la bonne volonté du lecteur récompense mal. Ces raisons font qu'on improvise trop aisément le roman que le public féminin, les feuilletons de journaux et de revues, réclament encore : et elles nuisent ainsi, gravement, au genre lui-même.

Les raisons purement littéraires sont aussi graves. Peut-être la plus grande est-elle que l'idéal propre au roman ne soit plus le but unique d'une génération comme au temps du naturalisme ou du roman psychologique, de 1875 à 1895. A ce moment, sous l'impulsion de Flaubert, des frères de Goncourt, de Zola, de Daudet, de Maupassant, d'une part, et, de l'autre, du roman russe et de la psychologie de Bourget, tout le monde littéraire s'accordait à voir dans le roman la forme capitale de la littérature individualiste et sociale, l'instrument par excellence de la peinture des mœurs, de la confession intellectuelle, de l'enquête sur la société. La France, après la terrible convulsion de 1870–1871, s'interrogeait anxieusement, avec une grande soif de vérité. Au théâtre régnait le drame romantique, ou la comédie bourgeoise pleine des théories bruyantes et factices de Dumas fils. L'étude de la vie profonde se concentrait dans le roman, et c'est là seulement que s'élaboraient les chefs-d'œuvre, que se développaient les vastes conceptions, que se manifestaient les audaces de procédés et d'idées. L'éclat du roman fut alors incomparable, et il ne nous a laissé que la faculté de l'imiter. Là ont été fondées les assises mêmes du genre, et il n'apparaît pas que les auteurs succédant à cette génération de grands romanciers aient ajouté à cette solide construction. Au contraire, ils semblent plutôt avoir cherché à la négliger ; et on en est venu aujourd'hui à publier sous le nom de roman n'importe quel écrit en prose de long développement. C'est dans ce sens que les éditeurs baptisent roman tout manuscrit qu'on leur présente, qu'il s'agisse d'un conte philosophique, d'un récit d'aventures ou d'une histoire sentimentale. Ce qui désignait très précisément un genre littéraire est devenue une simple classification de librairie.

Dans cette quantité de volumes annuels, très peu gardent donc le caractère propre du roman tel que Flaubert en a donné d'impérissables modèles. Il est donné à beaucoup de produire des écrits intéressants rien qu'en racontant leurs impressions, dans une époque ou la culture générale est devenue telle que tout homme ayant voyagé, vécu passionnellement et souffert pourrait composer un ouvrage. Mais l'art du roman est très spécial,

et ne se confond ni avec le talent de poète, ni avec celui du conteur ou du critique. Si le mot de roman perd son sens aujourd'hui, s'il a désigné au dix-huitième siècle des récits fictifs et sentimentaux, le dix-neuvième siècle lui a donné, par l'autorité d'une série d'œuvres splendides, une physionomie très précise. Le roman, c'est Dickens, Dostoievsky, Tolstoï, Meredith, Flaubert, Zola, Maupassant, France, Goncourt, Balzac, Hardy, d'Annunzio : et quand nous prononçons ces noms illustres, nous avons à l'instant une idée du roman qui ne ressemble à rien qu'à elle-même, nous nous formons une conception bien définie. Nous savons qu'il s'agit d'une composition vaste et minutieuse, où la progression des caractères est révélée par les situations, où l'étude des âmes et de leurs relations avec le temps est le sujet essentiel, où tout doit tendre à la définition des mouvements psychiques d'un individu ou d'une classe. Nous savons qu'il y faut au plus haut point la science des préparations, des gradations et des nuances, l'éloquence des faits, la concentration du style, le sens de la vérité et de la sincère émotion, le don de faire coexister des créatures dissemblables : en un mot, l'art du récit s'ajoutant aux qualités du sociologue et du physiologiste. C'est cela qui nous émeut et nous frappe d'admiration en lisant, " Le Père Goriot," " Anna Karenine," " L'Idiot," " L'Egoïste," " Madame Bovary," " La Joie de vivre," " Pierre et Jean," " Le Lys rouge," " Renée Mauperin," " Tess d'Urberville," " L'Intrus," ou " Les Temps difficiles." C'est une forme du génie qui reste très particulière, et que le dix-neuvième siècle a placée au premier rang dans la gloire des littératures européennes.

Aucun de ces grands noms n'a aujourd'hui d'équivalent, à l'exception de ceux qui désignent encore des vivants, comme Tolstoï, qui a définitivement quitté la littérature pour l'apostolat ; M. Meredith, qui achève une vie hautaine et glorieuse ; M. Hardy, M. France, M. d'Annunzio, qui sont encore en pleine activité de pensée. La conception d'une *école* dans le roman n'a pas été reprise depuis Zola et ses disciples. Le mouvement symboliste français a détourné vers la poésie et la prose poétique une partie de nos forces littéraires. Nous avons donc actuellement en France un certain nombre d'écrivains de roman qui suivent chacun leur voie sans souci de se réunir, et il faut les étudier séparément. Les uns proviennent du naturalisme, les autres ont des tendances lyriques et décoratives, les autres cherchent une formule de roman social, les autres ne veulent être que des artistes du style : certains se réfèrent au monde antique, d'autres continuent la tradition du roman passionnel, et d'autres essaient de retrouver dans Balzac les éléments du roman de mœurs

provinciales. Tous ont des mérites, trois ou quatre sont de grands et puissants écrivains : mais ils donnent bien l'impression de s'être, en habiles lieutenants, partagé l'empire d'Alexandre. Chacun a ses imitateurs dans un domaine attrayant, une curieuse province littéraire. Aucun n'a la puissance incontestée qui fasse de lui le chef du roman français, comme l'ont été Balzac, ou Flaubert, ou Zola ici, Dickens en Angleterre, Dostoievsky en Russie, d'Annunzio en Italie. Aucun n'ouvre une route absolument nouvelle. C'est pourquoi l'avenir du roman français reste imprévisible : c'est pourquoi, malgré ces quelques beaux talents et une élite très appréciable, suffisante à donner de l'éclat à une époque, il y a une crise d'indécision dans le genre lui-même, comme il y en a une dans la peinture depuis que la grande génération des impressionnistes a conclu son effort.

II

Les figures dominantes du roman français actuel sont, à des titres très differents, celles de MM. Anatole France, Pierre Loti, Paul Adam, J. H. Rosny, Elémir Bourges, Paul Bourget.

Derrière elles, au second plan, se groupent des personnalités comme celles de MM. Barrès, Mirbeau, Léon Daudet, Pierre Louÿs, Abel Hermant, Paul Hervieu, Margueritte, Prévost, Charles-Henry Hirsch, Remy de Gourmont, Boylesve, Henri de Régnier, Mmes. Marni, de Noailles, Rachilde, de Régnier. Ce sont là les noms les plus réputés et les plus valables. Il y faudra bientôt ajouter ceux de quelques jeunes hommes, et il sied bien entendu d'écarter ceux des adroits et banals fournisseurs d'histoires sentimentales, érotiques ou mondaines qui peuvent alimenter les journaux, mais n'apportent rien de sérieux à l'histoire littéraire contemporaine.

De tous les romanciers, et en général de tous les écrivains français vivants, aucun n'occupe une situation aussi glorieuse, aussi vaste que celle de M. Anatole France. Personne, à l'heure actuelle, n'incarne mieux les plus frappantes qualités du génie de son pays que ce maître de la prose, dont l'ironie, le sens de perfection, le charme, s'alimentent aux sources du classicisme antique, du Moyen Age et du dix-huitième siècle. Erudit et malicieux, à la fois bénédictin et voltairien, terriblement sceptique sans amertume, M. Anatole France semblait avoir donné toute sa mesure d'artiste parfait, d'observateur désabusé, de nihiliste sentimental, lorsque sa récente évolution vers le socialisme a déconcerté ceux qui croyaient le mieux connaître. Il a conquis l'estime des lettrés et les honneurs académiques par les œuvres

de la première partie de sa carrière, depuis ses poèmes d'une pureté parnassienne jusqu'à un roman tendre et ingénu comme "Le Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard," à une évocation tragique comme "Thaïs," outre des contes admirables comme "Le Procurateur de Judée." Puis il a fait dans le roman moderne un incursion brusque en écrivant un chef-d'œuvre, "Le Lys rouge," où frissonne l'émotion passionnelle. Puis il a entrepris la critique satirique de nos mœurs sociales en publiant "L'Orme du Mail," "L'Anneau d'Améthyste" et "Le Mannequin d'Osier," où son analyse sarcastique raillait la morale bourgeoise et les principes de la société moyenne. Entre temps il rassurait avec un livre d'un caprice délicieux, "La Rôtisserie de la reine Pedauque," ceux de ses admirateurs que pouvait inquiéter l'audace antisociale que laissait entrevoir son scepticisme aimable, si longtemps fêté. Mais la crise de l'affaire Dreyfus transforma définitivement M. Anatole France en théoricien d'un socialisme presque anarchiste, et l'on découvrit avec stupeur que ce lettré, cet élégant, cet héritier du verbe magique et de la pensée diffuse de Renan, était plein de passion de justice, et de conviction libertaire. Il fallait quand même tout en s'effrayant de ses idées, admirer la forme d'œuvres comme "Monsieur Bergeret" ou "Crainquebille." "Sur la Pierre blanche" exposait les croyances de l'auteur et une société dévouée à la religion de la science, délivrée des dogmes et de la morale chrétienne. Il semble que dans son dernier ouvrage, "L'Ile des Pingouins," fantaisie athée et antisociale d'une grande violence, M. Anatole France ait perdu un peu de sa confiance dans la perfectibilité par la science telle que l'exposait Berthelot, car le dernier chapitre ne conclut qu'à la destruction de toute société capitaliste, à la faillite du machinisme. En même temps paraissait, après vingt ans de travail, une "Histoire de Jeanne Darc" qui est un véritable monument d'érudition impartiale.

Il est très difficile de préciser le cours d'une pensée aussi subtile. Ce qui est évident, c'est la haute raison, le profond sens de la vie dont cet observateur souriant mais perspicace n'à cessé de faire preuve. M. Anatole France a un sens prodigieux des illogismes dont la vie est pleine, et, sans colère, il les dénonce avec une sûreté infaillible. Il possède le magique pouvoir de tout dire avec une grâce qui laisse intactes la vérité et l'énergie. Sa prose est un enchantement, et le type même de la prose française issue de Montaigne, de Racine, de Voltaire. Il n'y admet ni éclat ni surcharge romantique. C'est une langue sans coloris, mais unique par la pureté de son timbre, l'eurythmie de ses périodes et la plénitude du sens donné à chaque terme. Elle a au plus haut degré le don du goût, sans que sa perfection

et sa mesure aient rien de cet idéal glacé et ennuyeux qu'on cultive dans les Académies. Sa clarté éblouissante, sa simplicité qui est le comble de l'art, sauvegardent étrangement le mystère d'une pensée qui se joue de toutes les idées humaines, les polit comme des bijoux, les mêle, s'en amuse, et voltige comme un sylphe au fronton de tous les temples. L'énigme apparente de cet esprit délicieux et troublant est peut-être résolue simplement par cet amour unique des idées en elles-mêmes, isolées de leur application, et en ce sens nous n'avons pas, et il n'y a pas au monde, d'intellectuel plus absolu que M. Anatole France.

Une telle conception littéraire exclut la puissance, qui ne naît que d'un effort en un seul sens, d'une préférence ardente pour un idéal ; c'est à M. Paul Adam qu'il faut la demander. La puissance est le don essentiel de ce romancier génial, de cet idéologue fiévreux, qui a signé quarante volumes en vingt-trois ans. Il commença par être le seul romancier du mouvement symboliste, composé presque exclusivement de poètes. Après un volume de début, " Chair molle," d'un naturalisme outrancier, il devint un impressionniste du style plus minutieux et plus aigu encore que les Goncourt, et commença des livres pleins de lyrisme, d'allégories, de symboles, d'idées neuves et curieuses, de visions étranges, comme " En Décor." Il donna, avec " Etre," un type de roman occultiste d'une farouche beauté. Puis il aborda le roman de mœurs modernes avec " Le Vice filial," " Les Cœurs utiles," " L'Année de Clarisse," l'utopie sociale avec " Les Cœurs nouveaux," et " Les Lettres de Malaisie," qui présagent les beaux romans de M. Wells, et enfin la peinture de l'énergie, de la lutte politique, de la guerre, avec " La Bataille d'Uhde," " Le Mystère des Foules," et " La Force," œuvre qui le plaça définitivement au premier rang des romanciers nouveaux. " La Force " mettait en scène les soldats de la Révolution et de l'Empire. Elle fut le premier drame d'une tétralogie dont les trois autres parties furent " L'Enfant d'Austerlitz," " La Ruse " et " Au Soleil de Juillet," décrivant la psychologie des libertaires vaincus de 1815 à 1830. Cette œuvre considérable occupa plusieurs années, après lesquelles M. Paul Adam revint à des romans d'une portée plus restreinte, comme " Le Serpent noir " ou " Les Lions." Parallèlement à cette série de livres, il ne cessa jamais de s'occuper d'histoire byzantine, et publia les vies d' " Irène " et d' " Anne Comnène," " Basile et Sophia," et, récemment, un chef-d'œuvre de reconstitution qui s'appelle " Irène et les Eunuques." Enfin il a récemment révélé quelque volumes d'essais d'éthique et de sociologie, " La Critique des Mœurs," " Le Triomphe des Médiocres,' '" La Morale de la

France," "La Morale de l'Amour"; et il faut ajouter à cette liste plusieurs volumes de contes, "La Parade amoureuse," "Les Tentatives passionnées," "Clarisse et l'Homme heureux."

L'œuvre de M. Paul Adam est presque fatigante à force de richesse et d'éclat. "L'art," a-t-il écrit, "est l'œuvre d'inscrire un dogme dans un symbole." Cette phrase peut servir d'épigraphe à toute sa production. C'est un créateur infatigable de figures héroïques et pittoresques. Il est imbu de philosophies, de mythes, de croyances qu'il concilie et entre lesquelles il se plaît à découvrir sans cesse des analogies imprévues. Lui aussi, comme M. France, a la passion du jeu des idées. Il décrit en peintre avec une force extraordinaire : mais toujours ses personnages ne sont que des signes d'idées générales, et ce romancier qui n'a jamais écrit un vers est avant tout un poète philosophique. Il a touché à toutes les pensées, à tous les idéaux, à toutes les préoccupations de notre esprit. Seul, le monde sentimental lui reste fermé. Jamais il n'a parlé de tendresse et d'amour : il hait le sentimentalisme et n'a peint l'amour que sous la forme de la volupté, avec une insistance érotique qui dépare un peu, parfois, son œuvre. Il éblouit et ne touche pas. Il entraîne l'esprit dans un vertige d'idées mais ne s'adresse jamais au cœur. Il faut, avec lui, penser énormément, mais jamais s'émouvoir, et sa merveilleuse littérature est uniquement cérébrale. On ne peut le lui reprocher, il est ainsi fait. Mais personne aujourd'hui en France ne fait preuve d'une souplesse, d'une compréhension et d'une force plus extraordinaires. M. Paul Adam est un créateur de héros, et sa morale est généreuse et humaine.

Il a soumis ses nombreux livres à deux lois de synthèse : tantôt il étudie des êtres isolés et supérieurs, qu'il groupe sous le titre de "Volontés Merveilleuses," tantôt il rattache personnages et épisodes à ce qu'il appelle "L'Histoire d'un idéal à travers les âges." Cet idéal est celui du libéralisme et de la libre-pensée des races latines, dont la franc-maçonnerie est une des formes historiques les plus frappantes. En ce sens, M. Paul Adam est au dix-neuvième siècle le seul romancier français, avec Balzac et Zola, à avoir réalisé un cycle de romans synthétisant une société, et il a essayé une fusion constante du réalisme et de l'idéologie. C'est ce qui donne a ses livres d'artiste un caractère profondément original. Ils restent distincts des lois et du programme du roman proprement dit, parce que la vie du cœur, l'émotion intérieure, qui sont les grands sujets du roman, restent absents de son œuvre fougueuse : mais on ne peut que rester étonné et subjugué par l'intensité de la vie cérébrale, par le prestige d'intelligence de M. Paul Adam. Si son style était moins fébrile,

si la prodigalité de ses aperçus se tempérait par un peu plus de mesure, de choix, de sérénité, si son désir de convaincre comportait plus d'émotion, il faudrait le considérer comme un des plus grands écrivains de son pays. Mais lui-même a expliqué qu'à l'émotion de sentiment il désirait substituer, comme plus noble et plus féconde, l'*émotion de pensée :* et cela donne à ses plus brillantes évocations de la vie une base abstraite et un peu aride qui déconcerte le public, plus respectueux que subjugué devant son immense labeur.

Il y a certainement chez M. Paul Adam ce qu'on appelle du génie, alors qu'on ne saurait employer ce terme en pensant à la raison lucide et au sens de perfection par lesquels M. Anatole France lui est très supérieur. Il n'y a pas davantage de génie chez MM. J. H. Rosny : mais il y a dans leur grand et profond talent une gravité, une beauté, une émotion, un sens de la pitié, qui les rend admirables. Ils sont seuls à apporter à la France actuelle une qualité de pensée voisine de celle du roman russe. Eux aussi sont des romanciers sociaux, mais ils s'attachent à l'intimité des cœurs et non aux dons brillants de l'esprit. Leur grande idée dominante, à travers l'étude sévère des misères sociales, c'est la foi dans la perfectibilité de l'homme, et ils extraient de la douleur un optimisme altruiste.

Leur œuvre est considérable : elle se développe depuis vingt-cinq ans. Ils ont débuté par un roman de mœurs londoniennes, "Nell Horn," histoire d'une petite salutiste, qui est un des livres les plus émouvants qu'on puisse lire, et dont le coloris tragique fait penser à Dostoievsky et au "Jude l'obscur" de M. Thomas Hardy. Puis ils ont abordé à la fois le roman social et le roman des origines humaines. Dans ce dernier genre, ou ils ont réellement apporté une note inconnue auparavant, on peut ranger "Les Xipéhuz," "Le Cataclysme," "Un autre Monde," "Vamireh," "Eyrimah," qui dépeignent les temps préhistoriques, étudient, dans des décors d'une poésie puissante, la formation des premiers instincts de solidarité et de religion. Dans les romans sociaux est exposée une morale stoïque et émue tout ensemble. "Daniel Valgraive," "L'Impérieuse bonté," "Le Bilatéral," "La Charpente," "L'autre Femme," "Sous le Fardeau," "Les Ames perdues," sont les commentaires d'une sociologie altruiste très noble. MM. J. H. Rosny ne sont pas des artistes de lettres. Ils sont essayé, au début, de se créer une langue où entraient les images fournies par la terminologie scientifique, et cette tentative curieuse n'aboutit qu'à un style pénible et ingrat. Ils y renoncèrent vite, et se désintéressèrent de ce qu'on appelle l'art d'écrire. Leur style est donc quelconque. Mais

ce qu'on peut leur demander et ce qu'on est sûr de trouver toujours en eux, c'est la connaissance minutieuse des milieux plébéiens, la force de la vérité, la pénétration psychologique, le don de l'émotion. C'est aussi l'amour sincère des pauvres êtres humains, des sacrifiés, des résignés : c'est le sens des grâces et des puretés cachées dans l'âme des humbles, c'est la haute croyance dans un idéal de relèvement moral par la science. On peut dire qu'il y a dans les frères Rosny plus de substance psychologique que chez un Anatole France ou un Paul Adam, bien qu'ils n'aient ni prestige de style ni prétention artistique. Ils sont infiniment humains, et ce sont eux peut-être qu'il faudrait nommer comme les premiers romanciers français actuels si l'on s'en tenait à la définition du roman telle qu'elle est indiquée au début de cette étude. Ils ont, à défaut de charme, un sens très grand de la composition : et un des côtés les moins attrayants de leur œuvre n'est pas la série de figures de femmes dévouées et conscientes d'un beau rôle de pitié qu'ils ont dessinées avec un respect infini. Il faut joindre à leurs nombreux romans, dont je n'ai pu nommer que quelques uns, plusieurs volumes de contes. Pour eux comme pour M. Paul Adam, le succès matériel, qui comble M. France, M. Loti ou d'autres, n'a pas égalé le succès d'estime. Leur gravité pensive, comme l'éclat et la profusion d'idées de M. Adam, inquiète la nonchalance du grand public désireux de lectures faciles et attrayantes : mais un public étranger devra être expressément averti que de tels écrivains, plus ou moins fêtés que l'autres, sont l'honneur de nos lettres, comme le furent dans leurs pays Dostoievsky ou Dickens quand la célébrité et la fortune allaient à de moins grands.

Le succès a encore moins récompensé M. Elémir Bourges, qui vit en solitaire et dont la critique ne s'occupe pas. Mais l'admiration de l'élite est allée le chercher dans sa retraite. Il n'a publié que trois volumes en vingt-cinq ans, si l'on ne tient pas compte d'un livre de début, " Sous la hache," roman de la Révolution en Vendée, qu'il désavoue. On doit à M. Bourges " Le Crépuscule des Dieux," roman qui dépeint la déchéance d'une famille de princes germaniques avant l'unité allemande, et un autre roman, " Les Oiseaux s'envolent et les Fleurs tombent," décrivant les crimes et les malheurs d'une famille de grands seigneurs slaves pareils à de modernes Atrides. Enfin est paru un vaste poème philosophique, " La Nef," célébrant Prométhée et les Argonautes. Un roman comme " Le Crépuscule des Dieux " est digne de Flaubert par la perfection du style, la sobre puissance des péripéties tragiques, la maîtrise de la psychologie. Il semble impossible de pousser plus loin l'art d'écrire

et de composer : et on peut en dire autant de " Les Oiseaux s'envolent et les Fleurs tombent," où règne une sombre grandeur shakespearienne, et où se révèle chez l'auteur un pessimisme éloquent et farouche. " La Nef " contient de merveilleux épisodes de prose lyrique. M. Elémir Bourges est un très noble artiste hanté du désir de perfection, qui consacre douze ans à une œuvre, et n'appartient à aucun groupe littéraire : mais ce qu'il produit sera durable et survivra à bien des conceptions plus brillantes et plus séductrices. On ne saurait oublier—et l'histoire générale des littératures est là pour le rappeler—que le sort d'une œuvre, et son influence profonde sur un art, n'est aucunement lié à sa notoriété et à sa vente immédiates. Sans critique, sans publicité, sans profit matériel, un livre comme " Le Crépuscule des Dieux " est considéré comme un modèle admirable par tous ceux qui, en France, aiment et comprennent la beauté du style et la force de la pensée. C'est pourquoi la situation morale de M. Bourges le met au premier rang de nos prosateurs.

Le cas de M. Pierre Loti est bien différent. Il connaît toute la gloire, il est très célèbre et très fortuné : chacun de ses ouvrages est comblé d'éloges. Cependant on peut dire sans paradoxe qu'il est fort mal compris par la critique: et son existence de voyageur constamment étranger à tout le mouvement littéraire contribue à entretenir le malentendu. M. Loti a fait preuve des dons de la plus délicate psychologie et de l'émotion la plus troublante dans quelques livres comme " Aziyadé," " Le Roman d'un Spahi," " Pêcheur d'Islande " (son chef-d'œuvre), " Le Roman d'un Enfant," " Le Livre de la Pitié et de la Mort," " Ramuntcho." Il semble qu'il ait totalement abandonné l'étude des êtres pour ne plus écrire que des relations de voyages, qui n'appartiennent plus du tout au roman. De plus en plus son art, sa vision, échappent à l'analyse, on en subit le charme sans se l'expliquer. Le charme de M. Pierre Loti est une énigme littéraire. On ne peut découvrir dans ses livres la moindre trace de ce qu'on appelle une pensée ou une idée. Il n'est aucunement intellectuel, et on dirait qu'il ignore absolument la foule des préoccupations artistiques, sociales, psychologiques qui nous obsèdent. C'est un extraordinaire organisme de sensibilité réceptive, une plaque sensible où s'inscrivent des nuances d'une ténuité infinie, mais il ne pense rien et ne fait rien penser : il est magnétisé et magnétise ceux qui le lisent. D'autre part, si on étudie avec soin son style, ou s'aperçoit avec stupeur que la syntaxe en est très simple, que le choix des épithètes est presque banal, et qu'on ne peut rien y découvrir qui justifie le charme

morbide et délicieux de la lecture. Un Renan, un Flaubert, un Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, un France, ont leur langue, qui se reconnaît à l'instant et qui a ses marques distinctes : le style de M. Loti, quand on essaie de la définir, se dissout comme un pollen. Il use des mots de tout le monde et ignore toute recherche littéraire. Et cependant, par quelle magie est-on ému et attaché dès qu'on ouvre un de ses livres ? La critique l'a comblé de flatteries, mais elle n'a jamais donné une réponse nette à cette question. Le pouvoir subtil de cette âme dédaigneuse, capricieuse, mélancolique, promenant dans l'univers son pessimisme désenchanté, sa nostalgie et ses naïvetés raffinées demeure un secret. Quoi qu'il en soit, sans originalité de pensée ni de langage, M. Pierre Loti offre l'exemple unique d'un enchanteur littéraire, d'un peintre incomparable de l'Orient et de la mer, qu'on s'irrite d'admirer et auquel on revient sans cesse. "Vers Ispahan," "La Galilée," "Le Désert," "L'Ile de Philæ," "Jérusalem," sont des poèmes en prose d'une adorable harmonie, réalisés par un écrivain inclassable : et ces œuvres si fluides contiennent pourtant une force très grande, car, si on relit les premiers romans de M. Loti, déjà vieux de vingt-cinq années, on y trouve le même prestige, le même timbre étrange et voilé, et rien en eux n'a vieilli, peut-être parce qu'ils ne contiennent aucune des idées que nous acclamons et rejetons tour à tour.

Il faut enfin en venir à M. Paul Bourget, qui occupe dans le roman actuel une place très considérable. Il est en France le créateur et le représentant le plus célèbre du roman psychologique. M. Paul Bourget a commencé par publier quelques beaux romans d'analyse ou se révélait une grande sensibilité et le don d'évocation des âmes : "André Cornélis," "L'Irréparable," "Un Crime d'Amour," "Mensonges," "Un Cœur de Femme." Avec "Le Disciple," il a tenté une étude sévère de l'immoralité autorisée par une fausse conception de l'esprit darwiniste. Ce livre était lourd, encombré de dissertations arides, et d'une thèse partiale : mais il témoignait du grand effort d'un idéologue intelligent. D'autre part M. Bourget avait publié ses "Essais de Psychologie contemporaine," qui contenaient des études très sérieuses et très remarquables. La réputation lui vint, et malheureusement il y résista mal. Le monde lui offrit des séductions dangereuses, et, restreignant fâcheusement son domaine d'observation, M. Bourget devint le confesseur des âmes de mondaines et n'écrivit plus que des romans féminins, véritables hymnes à l'élégance et aux sentiments factices des désœuvrées et des oisives, pour la plus grande joie des snobs, et le regret, puis l'antipathie, des écrivains qui ne limitent pas la vie et ses

problèmes à l'étude de l'adultère et de la société fortunée. Malgré la fadeur des sujets sentimentaux, et l'ingéniosité stérile d'analyses interminables, les romans de M. Bourget restent lourds, dénués d'élégance, faits par un professeur qui s'est mêlé au monde sans y être né, et leur plus grave défaut est une langue incorrecte, terne, pleine d'impropriétés choquantes. Des livres au titre prétentieux comme "Cosmopolis" ne contiennent aucune synthèse, aucune vérité profonde, aucune émotion, et l'abondance des digressions n'y peut masquer l'insuffisance de l'action et la facticité des caractères. La société aristocratique n'en a pas moins fait fête à ces ouvrages qui ne s'occupent que d'elle, de sa noblesse, de ses sports, de ses flirts, de ses comédies amoureuses, et elle a su gré à l'auteur de sa naïve admiration pour le luxe. La situation de M. Bourget, au point de vue de la vente de la notoriété, est donc considérable, alors que les écrivains l'apprécient peu. Depuis quelques années il s'est converti au catholicisme et est devenu réactionnaire, ce qui l'a conduit à écrire des romans à thèse comme "L'Etape" ou "L'Emigré," véritables réquisitoires contre la libre-pensée et l'esprit républicain. L'intrigue en est pesante, et tout y est présenté avec partialité. Ce ne sont ni des œuvres d'art ni des œuvres d'une réelle valeur sociologique, mais on y voit exprimer toutes les rancunes d'une caste contre un mouvement social qui la deborde, et cette raison suffit pour maintenir le prestige mondain de l'auteur. M. Paul Bourget reste malgré tout un écrivain dont les débuts avaient mieux fait augurer. Qu'il soit le psychologue de l'adultère élégant, ou le porte-paroles d'une petite société orgueilleuse et aigrie, qu'il évolue de l'immoralité langoureuse à la pruderie et de l'esprit scientifique au catéchisme, toujours il manque de passion, d'éloquence, d'émotion intense et de naturel. Son esprit est sec et apprêté, sa prétention à la distinction est trahie par un style terne et un tour d'esprit trop raisonneur : le meilleur de son œuvre est encore sa critique, et il est probable que ses "Essais" seront encore lus avec intérêt et agrément alors qu'on aura délaissé depuis longtemps les romans où il se demande pendant quatre cents pages si telle femme du monde devra ou non se donner à un élégant, dans quelles circonstances, et après quelle sorte de discours compliqués sur l'amour, l'âme, les convenances et l'infini. C'est dans d'autres conditions de beauté, avec une langue merveilleuse et une splendide violence passionnelle, que de tels sujets suffisent à un Gabriel d'Annunzio pour créer "L'Enfant de Volupté," "Le Triomphe de la Mort" ou "Le Feu"! On a pu faire de M. Bourget la critique la plus amusante et la plus juste en disant

que, pour lui, les créatures humaines n'avaient pas d'âmes à moins de posséder cinquante mille francs de rente. Malgré sa réputation, son influence est nulle sur la littérature française actuelle, alors qu'à ses débuts il promettait de compter, avec M. France, M. Lemaître, M. Barrès, parmi les maîtres de la jeunesse.

M. Anatole France représente le roman moraliste, M. Paul Adam le roman symbolique et épique, M. Pierre Loti le roman d'émotion objective, MM. J. H. Rosny le roman sociologique, M. Elémir Bourges le roman philosophique, M. Paul Bourget le roman d'analyse sentimentale. En tous on peut retrouver des influences : Montaigne et Voltaire chez M. France, Balzac et les Goncourt chez M. Adam, Eugène Fromentin chez M. Loti, Taine et Zola chez MM. Rosny, Saint-Simon et les tragiques anglais chez M. Bourges, Mme. de la Fayette et Benjamin Constant chez M. Bourget. Le roman naturaliste n'a plus de représentant considérable, étant né et mort avec Zola dont le puissant talent put seul en vivifier la conception puérile. Il nous faut maintenant en venir à des personnalités et à des genres secondaires.

(*To be concluded*)

Two Poets

By Edward Thomas

"Personæ of Ezra Pound." London. Elkin Mathews. 2*s.* 6*d.* net.
"Artemision: Idylls and Songs." By Maurice Hewlett. London. Elkin Mathews. 3*s.* 6*d.* net.

It is easier to enjoy than to praise Mr. Pound, easier to find fault with him, easiest to ridicule. His "Personæ," probably a first book, is strewn with signs of two battles not yet over, the battle with the world of a fresh soul who feels himself strong but alone, and the battle with words, the beautiful, the soiled, the rare, the antique words. It is not wonderful then that one coming up from the outside should be tempted for a moment to turn away from the battlefield with a promise to come back and see who and what is left. And yet such tumults are fascinating for themselves, especially if we know that sometimes when they are over, nothing, from the spectator's point of view, is left. In Mr. Pound's case we feel sure there will be a great soul left. Also, in the meantime, the book is well worth having for itself and regardless of its vague large promise.

Let us straightway acknowledge the faults; the signs of conflict; the old and foreign words and old spellings that stand doubtless for much that the ordinary reader it not privileged to detect; the tricky use of inverted commas; the rhythms at one time so free as not to be distinguishable at first from prose, at another time so stiff that "evanescent" becomes "evan'-scent"; the gobbets of Browningesque; and one piece of construction at the foot of p. 39 which we cannot unravel and are inclined to put down as not the only case of imperfect correction of proofs.

To say what this poet has not is not difficult; it will help to define him. He has no obvious grace, no sweetness, hardly any of the superficial good qualities of modern versifiers; not the smooth regularity of the Tennysonian tradition, nor the wavering, uncertain languor of the new, though there is more in his rhythms than is apparent at first through his carelessness of ordinary effects. He has not the current melancholy or resignation or unwillingness to live; nor the kind of feeling for

nature that runs to minute description and decorative metaphor. He cannot be usefully compared with any living writers, though he has read Mr. Yeats. Browning and Whitman he respects, and he could easily burlesque Browning if he liked. He knows mediæval poetry in the popular tongues, and Villon, and Ossian. He is equally fond of strict stanzas of many rhymes, of blank verse with many unfinished lines, of rhymeless or almost rhymeless lyrics, of Pindarics with or without rhyme. But these forms are not striking in themselves, since all are subdued to his spirit; in each he is true in his strength and weakness to himself, full of personality and with such power to express it that from the first to the last lines of most of his poems he holds us steadily in his own pure, grave, passionate world.

It will appear paradoxical to say after this that the chief part of his power is directness and simplicity. A characteristic opening is this, put in the mouth of an Italian poet—"Italian Campagna, 1309, The Open Road":

> Bah! I have sung women in three cities,
> But it is all the same;
> And I will sing of the sun . . .

or this, from "A Villonaud: Ballad of the Gibbet; or the Song of the Sixth Companion of Villon:"

> Drink ye a skoal for the gallows tree!
> François and Margot and thee and me,
> Drink we the comrades merrily
> That said us, "Till then" for the gallows tree!

In the poem "In Tempore Senectutis" the old man says to his old love:

> Red spears bore the warrior dawn
> Of old.
> Strange! Love, hast thou forgotten
> The red spears of the dawn,
> The pennants of the morning?

The finest of his pieces are the love-poems. In "Scriptor Ignotus: Ferrara, 1715," he astonishes us by using again the poet's claim, Ronsard's and Shakespeare's, to give immortality to a mistress by words, by "A new thing as hath not heretofore been writ." But it is not a playing upon an old theme as, *e.g.*, Locker-Lampson played on it. It is a piece of strong tender passion that happens to lean upon the old theme and to honour it. "In Praise of Ysolt" is equally beautiful in an entirely different way, showing that the writer does not depend upon a single mood or experience. The beauty of it is the beauty

of passion, sincerity and intensity, not of beautiful words and images and suggestions; on the contrary, the expression is as austere as Biblical prose. The thought dominates the words and is greater than they are.

It opens:

> In vain have I striven to teach my heart to bow;
> In vain have I said to him
> "There be many singers greater than thou."
>
> But his answer cometh, as winds and as lutany,
> As a vague crying upon the night
> That leaveth me no rest, saying ever,
> "Song, a song."

In the "Idyl for Glaucus" a woman hovers by the sea in search of Glaucus, who has tasted "the grass that made him sea-fellow with the other gods." Here the effect is full of human passion and natural magic, without any of the phrases which a reader of modern verse would expect in the treatment of such a subject. In "From Syria" and "From the Saddle" the thought is not new but it is made his own by genuineness, weakened only by allowing such a line as

> So if my line disclose distress.

"And thus in Nineveh" we venture to quote in its entirety, not as the best but as the shortest of these love-poems, with this warning that, like the two last, it does not reveal Mr. Pound neat, though we are confident that it will give conviction to our praise of his style:

> Aye! I am a poet and upon my tomb
> Shall maidens scatter rose leaves
> And men myrtles, ere the night
> Slays day with her dark sword.
>
> Lo! this thing is not mine
> Nor thine to hinder,
> For the custom is full old,
> And here in Nineveh have I beheld
> Many a singer pass and take his place
> In those dim halls where no man troubleth
> His sleep or song.
> And many a one hath sung his songs
> More craftily, more subtle-souled than I;
> And many a one now doth surpass
> My wave-worn beauty with his wind of flowers.
> Yet am I poet, and upon my tomb
> Shall all men scatter rose leaves
> Ere the night slay light
> With her blue sword.

It is not, Raama, that my song rings highest
Or more sweet in tone than any, but that I
Am here a Poet, that doth drink of life
As lesser men drink wine.

And on the same page is this wonderful little thing that builds itself so abruptly, swiftly, clearly into the air :

I ha' seen them mid the clouds on the heather.
Lo ! they pause not for love nor for sorrow,
Yet their eyes are as the eyes of a maid to her lover,
When the white hart breaks his cover
And the white wind breaks the morn.
'Tis the white stag, Fame, we're a-hunting,
Bid the world's hounds come to horn !

In taking leave of this admirable poet we should like to mention other poems we have particularly enjoyed, " La Fraisne," " Famam Librosque Cano " (a prophetic sketch of the kind of reader he will one day have), " Ballad for Gloom," " For E. McC. " (these two last very brilliant and noble), "Occidit," and " Revolt against the Crepuscular Spirit in Modern Poetry " ; and to apologise to him for our own shortcomings and to any other readers for that insecuiity of modern criticism of which we feel ourselves at once a victim and a humble cause.

There is no conflict, no uncertainty, in Mr. Maurice Hewlett's " Artemision " ; there is achievement but no promise. Most of us he will astonish by appearing suddenly as a full-fledged poet with a thoroughly developed style and choice of subject, though some will remember the " Songs and Verses " of 1896, from which some of these poems are reprinted. The largest and the most interesting part of the book consists of three " Idylls of the Huntress," Artemis : the first, " Leto's Child," describing her childhood with Leto and her early godhood ; the second " The Niobids," the revenge taken by her brother Apollo and herself for Niobe's insult ; the third, " Latmos," her friendship with Endymion. The first is in octosyllabic couplets, the second in heroics, the third in a stanza of six decasyllabic lines of which the second, fourth and sixth rhyme with the first, and the fifth with the third. There are few living narrative poets we can read with equal pleasure. The writing is close and rich in colour of words and images, the rhythm never monotonous, the verses, on the contrary, tending to have no real movement at all, as modern poetry, so predominantly descriptive, seldom has. The essential thing is always just the verse we are at, not the end, nor yet the whole. One verse is as good as another and we can leave off or begin

anywhere as with a piece of lace. The style is a curious, far-sought one, giving an unmistakable quality to the work, and well maintained, though here and there his eclecticism is imperfectly mastered and leads to a line at which we hesitate as on the fifth line of

> Orion, that great hunter! Chios knows
> His end: no strength avail'd to meet such foes
> As Hymnia wing'd upon him; but he past,
> And still in Hell pursues with empty blows
> Shadowy game in shadowy antres vast,
> And still exults to watch their shadowy throes.

Artemis is the chief figure in all, and the effect is gained by emphasising her beauty, her chastity and the allied qualities of coldness and ferocity, and her connection with the open hills and the dim woods and their wildness and purity. The chastity, coldness and ferocity are treated in such a way as to give a distinctly sensual feeling to the poems. So also the wildness and purity of the country have something artificial and elaborate, suited to the statuesque whiteness and elegance of the goddess. She and her country belong rather to the land of the "Faerie Queene" than to Greece or to any other part of the earth where the sun shines and the wind blows, or even to such a land as that of Shakespeare's "Venus and Adonis." And this, too, notwithstanding abundant and charming realism in many of the details both of character and landscape, such as

> She quiver'd. As a bird
> Putteth his head askance and sideways peereth
> To watch that way where the stirr'd bush he heareth,
> And seems to hear with eyes, so quick and tense
> Look they about—so she with every sense
> Heard this . . .

(A comparison twice used, by the way.) With all the archaism of decoration the spirit is modern, and such a passage as the following could only belong to our age:

> Her way
> Is with the creatures wild and shy
> Darkling in coverts, where they lie
> Till thickest night come, and the hour,
> That all men charmeth and men's power,
> Leaves earth the fee of beast and bird.

Then probably the finest and certainly the most moving and real passage in the book is where Artemis becomes close friends with one of her nymphs who strays from her maiden path, who bears a child to Pan and, robbed of the child, returns to the goddess only to be repulsed and turned into a bear; and

this is handled with a human veracity that comes near to clashing with the tone of the whole. In all three poems the human tenderness and frailty of the nymph, of Niobe and of Endymion, are brought into strong contrast with that conventional character of Artemis, as a chaste, fierce goddess, which comes as something of a shock because it is concealed for a time under Mr. Hewlett's partly naturalistic treatment of her as a slim, beautiful huntress of human nature. The essential weakness of the poems lies in their remoteness from ancient myth on the one hand and entire credibility on the other, which makes Artemis a goddess only for dramatic effect in such a situation as the ghastly butchery of the Niobids. This weakness is perhaps inseparable from the nature of the poems, old tales told from a decorative instinct, with colours superinduced from without, and not from any deep conviction such as underlies Mr. Sturge Moore's use of classic themes. But they are choicely wrought, with equal richness and delicacy, and they undeniably create their own world. They only fall short of the great poems of the past which will occur to every one, and of Mr. Sturge Moore's in the present.

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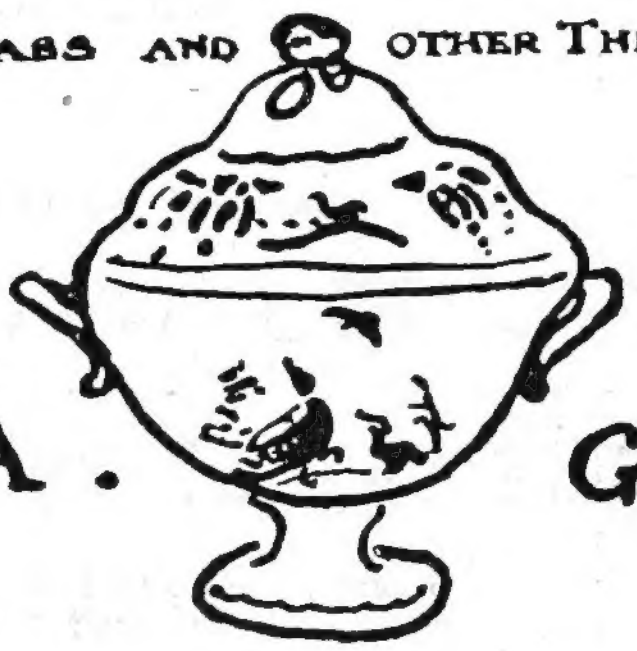

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